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SERMONS

TO

YOUNG WOMEN.

VOLUME II.

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YOUNG WOMEN,

IN TWO VOLUMES.

By JAMES FORDYCE, D.D.

VOLUME II.

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On Female Virtue, with Intellectual Accompliſhments.

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ON the ſubject of Intellectual Accompliſhments much remains to be ſaid. At a time when they are neglected by ſo many women, who, if they read at all, read only for a little tranſient amuſement, they cannot ſure, con-

ſidering their importance, be inculcated too ſtrongly. They may, it is true, be perverted. What is there of the greateſt moment, that may not? Becauſe works fit only for the veil of darkneſs have been wrought in the face of day, does it follow that "light is not ſweet, "or that it is not a pleaſant thing for the eyes "to behold the ſun;" or that benefits innumerable are not derived to mankind from the reſplendent luminaries of Nature? Were theſe extinguiſhed, what were this world? And, what, think ye, muſt be that mind where all is enveloped in a night of ignorance? "For "the ſoul," ſays Solomon, "to be without "knowledge is not good." Of ſo great a defect do we not ſee every day the unhappy conſequences in the conduct of both ſexes?

With regard to yours, my beloved ſiſters, I am willing to impute much of the folly and miſery that involve multitudes of women, not to their being altogether unacquainted with the main outlines of their duty, traced by the hand of God on every heart a little more or a little leſs clearly; but to their want of that reliſh for knowledge, and of thoſe attainments in it, which certainly tend to exclude many

temptations, and to fortify againſt the influence of others. On this account, I muſt again and again urge the culture of your Minds. Your Virtue, your Sobriety is intimately concerned in it. That ſhall be my firſt argument: its connexion with your dignity or figure in life ſhall be my ſecond; and my third ſhall turn on its uſefulneſs to promote your comfort and felicity: conſiderations ſurely that merit your attention. I pray God to bleſs them for your improvement.

I begin with ſhowing, that the Intellectual Accompliſhments briefly delineated in the preceding diſcourſe will have a tendency to exclude many temptations. To what dangerous reſources are the generality of young women driven by the love of pleaſure and amuſement, ill directed! Having formed no taſte for thoſe that ariſe from reading, writing, agreeable reflexions, and rational converſation, their paſſions, naturally ardent, fly without previous examination to every object which flatters that ardour by promiſing all the vivacity of joy. In this career, it is not difficult to conceive what ſnares may entrap Beauty, and what habits may corrupt Innocence.

When firſt entered on, it is very poſſible that no evil is intended. For that very reaſon none is ſuſpected; and this confidence betrays. When Vice begins to unveil her daring front, Conſcience is ſtartled, and ſhrinks from the monſter. But curioſity, opportunity, importunity, the flatteries of ſelf-deceit, the dreams of youthful fancy, the bias of faſhion, the fear of banter ſhould they venture to oppoſe; all theſe concur with the powers of darkneſs in miſleading the poor unexperienced adventurers: and to courſes, of which the bare idea filled them at a diſtance with horror, familiarity at laſt reconciles them; if not ſo far as to procure real or thorough approbation, far enough however to engage perſeverance attended with a feeling of remorſe that gradually abates, till they are often inextricably entangled in a thicket of guilt and wretchedneſs.

What numbers of miſerable beings are now loſt there, whoſe firſt deviations were occaſioned by nothing more than a deſire of eſcaping from inactivity or dulneſs to ſomething that might divert or employ! But had an early love of books prevented this languor, by furniſhing at home a harmleſs and varied en-

tertainment, such as was adapted to give play even to the liveliest imagination, there had been evidently much less inducement to seek it abroad; and many a soul that is at this day hurrying on to destruction, might probably, in that case, have been walking with Wisdom and Happiness. Nor would I have you think, that I speak of those only who have broke through all the restraints of decorum. There are a thousand tracks leading to sin and woe, besides that infamous road to which the hand of public censure is pointed.

The supposing, indeed, so wide a distance between the extremities of guilt and its intermediate stages, is among the most natural mistakes of a mind destitute of knowledge. Of this internal light one of the great advantages is, to throw such illumination on virtue and vice through all their essential, and even many of their minute distinctions, as to make them to be discerned with clearness, and felt with conviction; while there rise up to view nameless beauties in holiness, and nameless deformities in sin, that pass unheeded by the dim inattentive eye of an understanding uninformed. This delicacy of perception alone, in

a breaſt not yet corrupted by evil cuſtom, will create a ſalutary dread of many purſuits and connexions, that often prove exceedingly hurtful. In general, it ſeems obvious, that by how much more we are acquanted with our duty, by ſo much the juſter apprehenſions we ſhall have of its importance, and by ſo much the greater capacity for performing it.

But the grand uſe of an affection for knowledge, as to the point before us, is that of preventing idleneſs and diſſipation, which it certainly does where ſuch affection is properly regulated: and this cannot be repeated too frequently, nor preſſed too powerfully. The human mind was made for action. In virtuous action conſiſts its higheſt enjoyment. It will not, it cannot continue long unemployed, eſpecially during the ſprightly ſeaſon of youth. Even feeble age finds its principal delight in recollecting the days of juvenile activity, and rehearſing the enterprizes which diſtinguiſhed that happy period. But now there are many young ladies, whoſe ſituation does not ſupply a ſphere for domeſtic exerciſe ſufficient to fill up that part of their time, which is not neceſſarily appropriated to female occupations and inno-

cent amuſements. What then ſhall they do with it, or with themſelves, if books be not called in to their aſſiſtance? Purſue the inquiry in your own minds. Many of you, alas! are but too well qualified to purſue it, can but too well imagine the inſipid, fooliſh, and even pernicious expedients, which under thoſe circumſtances are daily practiſed for killing time and thought.

In truth, it cannot appear ſurpriſing to ſee thoſe who have no notion of internal entertainment, hunting after faſhionable diverſions. For my part, I am only ſurpriſed, when thoſe who from a better education have had opportunities of knowing what an extent and diverſity of ideas and imagery, of information the moſt grateful to the mind, and of deſcription the moſt affecting to the heart, may be found in a well choſen library; when ſuch, I ſay, do yet prefer to all this the hollowneſs and dulneſs, which inſeparably attend a perpetual train of public amuſements, or private viſiting.

But I am inclined to hope, that a preference ſo unjuſt and unwiſe, is ſeldom made by thoſe laſt mentioned; that they who have taſted the pleaſure of converſing intimately

with the beſt authors living and dead, and from this happy commerce have contracted an intellectual turn, will not be often tempted to mingle with the unthinking crowd. When for the ſake of unbending the mind more entirely, and avoiding any unneceſſary air of ſingularity, they do at any time join it; the ſame turn will contribute to preſerve them from the ſeduction of vice and folly.

It is not to be denied, that from the head to the heart the diſtance, in a moral reckoning, is often immenſe; that between ſublimity of idea and elevation of conduct there is no neceſſary connection; that the fineſt ſentiments and the groſſeſt paſſions have been obſerved to meet in the ſame mind: that our Firſt Mother was betrayed by the pride of knowing; and that the height of capacity in Lucifer, only increaſed the fall of that ſon of the morning. All this is true. But ſhall we hence infer, that the deſire of knowledge well directed, and wiſely applied, is not likely to produce any worthy impreſſions?

Imagine two young ladies, of whom one delights in elegant and virtuous ſtudies, the other in faſhionable idleneſs. Will you ſay,

that the former is equally in danger with the latter of deſcending to vulgar, or to vicious pleaſures! As familiarity with perſons of refined manners may be expected to communicate a correſponding refinement; is it not probable, that intimacy with the moſt beautiful compoſitions will, in the ſame way, impart a beauty to the ſoul? And is there not ground to believe, that this will make her who is poſſeſſed of it, aſhamed to allow herſelf in any thing unhandſome; even as it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that ſhe who has been genteely bred, will diſdain the thought of a low behaviour? Or, becauſe the natural tendency of things is ſometimes croſſed, will ye ſay that it is therefore deſtroyed? Have ye not heard, that a rule is not overthrown, but rather confirmed, by exceptions? Young people, we know, are often corrupted by bad books; and have we not likewiſe known them improved by good ones? She muſt be depraved and ſunk indeed, who from contemplating the majeſty and happineſs of Virtue in the beſt examples, together with the meanneſs and miſery of Vice in the worſt, that hiſtory or poetry holds up to view, can

go away, and in her own deportment counteract immediately the feelings of love and admiration for the one, of contempt and abhorrence for the other, which objects of this kind muſt unavoidably awaken. She again, who ſhould not perceive herſelf prompted to a prudent and amiable demeanour, or guarded againſt the contrary, by thoſe pictures of diſcretion and excellence on one hand, of levity and worthleſſneſs on the other, with which ſentimental and moral writers abound, muſt be abſolutely void of decency, or of reflexion. To inſtance but in one ſubject more; ſhe muſt be wholly given up to trifles that can purſue them with the ſame fondneſs, after having her imagination raiſed, and all her faculties expanded by thoſe wonderful repreſentations of the works of God, which are contained in many books of Philoſophy and Geography, Voyages and Travels.

But now repreſent to yourſelf a young lady, whoſe underſtanding is utterly uncultivated. What is there to correct her paſſions, or to govern her practice? What is there to direct her in the choice of companions, and diverſions; to guard her againſt

the follies of her own ſex, and the arts of ours; in ſhort, to prevent her falling into any or every ſnare, that is or may be laid for her? Suppoſe her to have received from nature the ſeeds of common ſenſe. Do theſe require no attention to raiſe them? or is this moſt uſeful plant to be reared without the aid of experience? But where, or how, is that to be obtained by a girl? Muſt ſhe diſcover the wiles and wickedneſs of libertines by converſing with them? Muſt ſhe learn how to defend againſt danger by having run into it; or how to avoid the blandiſhments of pleaſure by having felt its bitterneſs? By men the knowledge of the world is commonly gathered in it. Very different from the ſituation of women is theirs in this reſpect; and they, it is to be apprehended, often purchaſe a little wiſdom at a great expence. By entering into any company that tempts, engaging in any friendſhip that offers, or accepting of almoſt any creature that happens to court them, it is but too well known what miſchiefs a number of our young gentlemen incur. A female that acts upon the ſame plan is loſt; and ſhe who would effec-

tually eſcape diſhonour and remorſe, reproach and ridicule, muſt endeavour to know the world from books, to collect experience from thoſe who have bought it, and to ſhun miſconduct herſelf by obſerving the calamities it has occaſioned to others. But I ſaid,

Secondly, that Mental Acquiſitions were of importance to your dignity and figure in life. Conſider, my dear ſiſters, how many women are, in a diſcerning eye, leſſened by their extravagant attachment to dreſs and toys, to equipage and oſtentation; in a word, to all the gaudy apparatus of female vanity, together with the endleſsly ridiculous, no leſs than frequently fatal conſequences, which theſe draw after them. Conſider how trite and childiſh, men of ſenſe muſt neceſſarily deem thoſe arts, that are daily practiſed on our ſex by multitudes of yours; not to ſpeak now of worſe enticements. Conſider the emptineſs, inſipidity, and inelegance of their converſation—how contemptible! Above all the reſt, conſider the jealouſy and envy, the mean ſuſpicion and ſhameful malignity, to which we have ſeen the female breaſt enſlaved, and

frequently on the ſlighteſt foundation, frequently on no foundation at all—how debaſing! Now from theſe evils the love of letters, with that liberal caſt of thought which they are naturally calculated to give, would, I am perſuaded, be one powerful preſervative.

A young woman ſo worthily, and ſo happily engaged, will not find leiſure for unneceſſary trifles and idle parade: or if it were poſſible ſhe ſhould, a conſcious ſuperiority will enable her very much to deſpiſe them. Endowed with her powers of pleaſing, ſhe will not find herſelf reduced to the little tricks played off by many of her ſex. In the company of her friends, ſhe muſt ever appear with peculiar advantage. In other companies, where ſhe leaſt thinks of appearing, an agreeable tincture of intelligence, an eaſy correctneſs of expreſſion, if it ſhould be proper for her to take any part in the diſcourſe, will ſtill diffuſe themſelves. Perhaps too ſhe will deliver herſelf with a graceful, though modeſt freedom. Her letters, or any other compoſition that may fall from her pen, will be

read with particular eagerneſs and approbation; her correſpondence will be prized as an honour, and her acquaintance courted as a privilege; attention will hang upon her words, and reſpect follow in her train. Such a woman will know how to entertain and charm, beyond the duration of an hour. Is it carrying our ideas too far to ſay, that, in all probability, an emanation of ſentiment and ſpirit will be viſible in her air and manner, that her mind will radiate in her eyes? It may not always, but it will often. With regard to thoſe vile paſſions before mentioned, which ariſe from rivalſhip in dreſs, beauty, and the like; as ſhe has learnt to value herſelf on better things than the laſt, the firſt by conſequence will not have the ſame hold of her ſoul: beſides, I ſuppoſe her to have acquired an enlargement and generoſity, which nothing but books, or knowledge of the world, or the principles of genuine piety, can inſpire.

Of the two latter the operation is in ſome reſpects defective, without the concurrence of the former. How improving ſoever an acquaintance with life may be found on ſome

accounts, there are inſtances, in which it will hurt the feelings of the heart; if theſe be not from time to time ſoftened and cheriſhed, by the more ſoothing repreſentations of men and things ſupplied by authors of a candid ſtrain. It is alſo to be remembered, that, in matters of religion, a zeal without knowledge has been often deſtructive, and is always hurtful. But ſuppoſe no ſuch zeal to take place; ſuppoſe that meekneſs, as it certainly ought, makes a part, and a large one too, of the pious character in any woman; yet without the ſeaſonings of a good underſtanding, without ſomething of that ſalt and poignancy which are derived from writers of taſte and learning, there will ariſe, in repeated intercourſe, a ſameneſs and a flatneſs that muſt diminiſh eſteem, though they may not deſtroy affection. Add to this that, on a variety of ſubjects, ignorance will inevitably produce a poorneſs and vulgarity of thinking, which, to perſons whoſe views are nobler, will be rather diſguſtful.

In truth, the acquiſitions we recommend would prevent or cure moſt of thoſe little

prejudices, and little paſſions, which often hurt the ſex in the opinion of their beſt friends. Not to inſiſt on what has been mentioned more than once, their aſtoniſhing prepoſſeſſions in favour of public places, greatly owing to their want of ſomething rational and agreeable to employ them at home; what ſhall we ſay of that abſurd partiality, which they frequently ſhow for well dreſſed fops, who pretend indeed to admire them, but are too frivolous and conceited to admire any, in good earneſt, but themſelves? Surely a well informed underſtanding would enable women to deſpiſe ſuch inſignificance; and to give the preference to merit, and modeſty, in a plain habit.

To what ſhall we chiefly impute that female curioſity, which has been ſo long, and in moſt inſtances, ſo juſtly a topic of ſatire? Is it poſſible, that women could ſhow ſuch amazing eagerneſs to be acquainted with every minute particular in the life, character, dreſs, fortune, and circumſtances of others, did they poſſeſs a fund of domeſtic entertainment and liberal converſation? The original principle, by receiving a right di-

rection, might certainly be turned into a rich ſource of improvement, that would ſpread increaſing luſtre around you.

That aptneſs alſo to be aſtoniſhed, alarmed, affrighted at trifling accidents, imaginary evils, or natural events ever ſo little unuſual, which, when carried far, and frequently recurring, makes a young woman appear quite ſilly, is often the effect of ſhallowneſs. Ignorance is prone to admire; and admiration readily ſwells into a paſſion, or ſinks into a panic: whereas an enlightened mind is ſeldom wrought up to ecſtacy, and ſeldom overwhelmed by terror.

The ſame reaſoning will hold in relation to the incapacity of keeping a ſecret, with which your ſex have been ſo often reproached. Thoſe inſignificant females, who are deſtitute of better ideas, will be naturally tempted to give themſelves an air of conſequence, by communicating every piece of information which they happen to receive under the notion of ſecrecy. But the acquiſition of valuable knowledge helps to remove this temptation, by conferring real import

ance, as well as by ſupplying fitter converſation.

Again, were women to contemplate the fatal conſequences of avarice, ambition, vanity, luxury, the violence of love, and the fury of revenge, as appearing in the ruin of families, the devaſtation of provinces, and the fall of empires; is there not reaſon to hope, they would be leſs dazzled with thoſe objects, and leſs affected by thoſe occaſions, that are apt to foment ſuch propenſities;——propenſities which, though in their caſe not ſo conſequential to others, are yet many times extremely degrading, as well as pernicious, to themſelves.

And with regard to that ignoble diſpoſition to ſcandal, by many deemed one of the characteriſtic blemiſhes of your ſex; you could not poſſibly indulge it ſo often, were you furniſhed with a ſufficient compaſs of obſervation and ſentiment, on ſubjects much more innocent, and ſurely not leſs intereſting—Not leſs intereſting, did I ſay? How, in the name of God, are you concerned with the faults of thoſe with whom

you have no connexion? or what call have you to remark upon them, farther than may be neceſſary to guard yourſelves or others againſt their contagion, or their conſequences? Are you vain of the wit and vivacity which you diſplay, or fancy you diſplay, on ſuch occaſions? Ah, what ſuperior honour would ye acquire from candour, ſweetneſs, and ſelf-correction! But thoſe qualities are the offspring of ſelf-knowledge, and a comprehenſion of what is truly beautiful and becoming in life. Let me perſuade you, my beloved pupils, with all your improvements, "with all your gettings, to get" theſe two eſſential parts of "Underſtanding." From them will reſult benefits innumerable: this among the reſt; they will prevent I know not what affectations, by which many a pretty fool of your ſex is daily expoſed.

But why be at all this pains? On theſe points you are under no kind of apprehenſion; confident that, wherever you appear, you cannot fail of commanding regard; ſure that, whenever you are pleaſed to open thoſe lips, which you have heard ſo frequently praiſed, every ear will be attentive, and

every heart allured. Indeed? Are ye very confident, very ſure?——Take care you be not diſappointed. It is my duty to tell you, whether you will believe it or no, that I have known many a man, who, in the company of women, has applauded that which he inwardly deſpiſed; and with hypocritical rapture liſtened to nonſenſe, where the ſpeaker was handſome. Obſequiouſneſs and adulation will attend on youth and beauty. But can you be contented with an incenſe ſo cheap; an incenſe offered to a face or to a ſhape alone; an incenſe that does not riſe from the altar of the heart; an incenſe, in fine, that is laviſhed, with an undiſtinguiſhing hand, on every inſignificant image that happens to be caſt in a regular mould, and coloured with a mixture of white and red? Where, alas! is your delicacy? Have you no ingenuous pride? Are you ſo very vain, (pride and vanity are different things) ſo very ignorant, after all the admonitions you have received, as ſtill to conſtrue flattery into approbation, and ſmiles into attachment? But I intreat you, reflect. When beauty and youth are gone, and go they will—what

then? Why, then, all this adulation and obſequiouſneſs will vaniſh with them; and if you be not adorned with attractions more ſubſtantial and durable, into what neglected things will you have the mortification to ſink!

An accompliſhed Woman can never become an object of neglect: ſhe muſt always remain an object of diſtinction amongſt her acquaintance. When ſhe was young, ſhe might pleaſe more; but as even then ſhe pleaſed chiefly by her mind, ſhe will therefore continue to pleaſe ſtill. The diſcerning Few at leaſt will diſcover in her, beauties which neither the inroads of age, nor the ravage of ſickneſs, can deface. When "declined into the vale of years," ſhe will ſtill, from the ſuperiority of her character, ſtand forth an exalted figure. Senſe and capacity, joined to worth and ſweetneſs, are exempted from the condition of all things elſe; which is to loſe their influence, when they loſe their novelty. "The ornament "of grace which Wiſdom ſhall give to thy "head," will not appear with leſs real luſtre, when infirmity ſhall cauſe that head to

ſhake. "The crown of glory which ſhe "ſhall deliver to thee," will in Reaſon's eye receive new dignity from grey hairs: or rather, according to our inſpired author, thoſe "grey hairs are" themſelves "a crown "of glory, being found in the way of righ-"teouſneſs."

Do ye know a woman far advanced in life, but yet farther in virtue and underſtanding, who with mild inſinuation employs them to render wiſe and happy thoſe about her, eſpecially the young; who for ſuch in particular makes every kind allowance, not forgetting thoſe early days, when ſhe too ſtood in need of indulgence; who, when her health will permit, takes pleaſure in ſeeing herſelf ſurrounded by a circle of youth innocently gay, condeſcending even to mix in their little ſports, and by a graceful complacency of look, and pleaſing remainder of ancient humour, to encourage aud promote their harmleſs amuſement? Do you know ſuch a woman? Then ſpeak your opinion freely. Will this youthful circle be in any danger of deſpiſing her, becauſe ſhe is old? On the contrary, will they not contend with

one another, who ſhall pay her moſt veneration, who ſhall ſtand higheſt in her affection? Can you conceive a character more reſpectable, and at the ſame time more amiable? What is there good or excellent, to which ſhe will not have it in her power to win them?

And now think of a decayed beauty, who in the height of her bloom, and the career of her conqueſts, truſted ſolely to that bloom, and never dreamt of ſecuring thoſe conqueſts, ſuch as they were, by any thing more ſolid and abiding. Inexpreſſibly mortified that both are at an end, ſhe would fain, if poſſible, keep up the appearance of them ſtill. How? By a conſtrained vivacity, by a juvenile dreſs, by that affectation of allurement and importance, which we ſo readily pardon to the prime of life, but which in its decline is univerſally condemned as aukward and unnatural. Place her in the young aſſembly we have juſt ſuppoſed. There let her endeavour to ſparkle, as in the days of old; there let her lay traps for admiration amidſt the wrinkles of age. How ludicrous, and how melancholy at the ſame moment! What

girl, or what boy of them all, will not be ſtruck with the impropriety? Every mark of decay, every ſymptom of change, will be traced and examined with acuteneſs. No part of her figure will be overlooked, not a ſingle ſlip in her behaviour forgiven: whereas, if warned by the effects of time, ſhe prudently gave up to her juniors all competition of looks and ſhow, and ſtudied only to make herſelf agreeable by her converſation and manners; there is ſcarcely one of thoſe little critics that would ever reflect upon her years, or that would not be delighted with her good ſenſe, and obliging deportment.——No, my young friends, nothing can ſave you from contempt at that period, if during this you be not at pains to improve your minds. She who is, ſhall in one ſenſe, and that the beſt, be always young.

If ſhe ſhould continue ſingle, and her ſituation, or her choice, ſhould lead her to cultivate but few acquaintance, amongſt them ſhe muſt ever be loved and valued. If ſhe ſhould be married; and to a man of tolerable judgment, with tolerable temper, he will

count himſelf happy in ſuch an aſſociate; he will even be proud of thoſe talents in her which do honour to his election. I have always remarked, that women of capacity and elegance have poſſeſſed the hearts of their huſbands in a degree which is not common; I mean, where thoſe huſbands had any worth or diſcernment. You will eaſily imagine, that I ſuppoſe the women in queſtion too wiſe, and too excellent, to affect ſuperiority; or not to give their partners all the credit and conſequence poſſible, on every occaſion. Between men and women there is ſeldom any rivalſhip in what relates merely to intellect; nor are the former ever much hurt by any conſcious inferiority in that reſpect, where the latter do not ſhow themſelves, eſpecially before company, arrogant or pretending.

I muſt not forget to ſubjoin how much the Mental Improvements, now enforced, will contribute to adorn and animate the companion, to direct and dignify the miſtreſs, to accompliſh the mother and the friend, to ſpread a charm over the whole matrimonial ſtate, and to relieve thoſe duller hours that

are apt to ſteal on the moſt delighful condition of humanity.

Nor can I diſmiſs this part of the argument, without mentioning what has often appeared to me one very remarkable inſtance, amongſt many that hiſtory records, of the tranſcendant power to captivate and preſerve eſteem, which Intellectual Accompliſhments, worthily exerted, confer upon a woman. It is that of Madam Maintenon, the celebrated favourite and wife of Lewis the Fourteenth.

This monarch, born with ſtrong propenſities to pleaſure, bred in its very lap, indulged from the beginning in all his paſſions, early poſſeſſed of unlimited power, conſtantly accuſtomed to the moſt exquiſite flattery, formerly drunk with ſucceſs and glory, always courted by the female ſex with every art that beauty, wit, or ambition could employ, in his intercourſe with them ſtill addicted to novelty and change—this very monarch, not yet arrived at the age of fifty, in full health, environed with all the ſplendor of a moſt brilliant court, read in little elſe beſide comedies and novels, finds in the converſation of

that lady, whoſe origin was not high, whoſe fortunes had been always low, and who was now older than himſelf by ſeveral years—finds, I ſay, in her converſation ſuch innocence, ſuch ſweetneſs, ſuch unequalled charms of taſte and intelligence, as induce him to break off every engagement of a voluptuous kind, and to enter with her into the moſt honourable of all connections, in which he appears to have maintained his fidelity to the laſt. Madam Maintenon had from her youth improved herſelf by reading and the beſt company, whom her beauty and talents drew about her, in a country where the ſociety of the women is much more regarded than in this. Lewis was firſt attracted by the extraordinary ſpirit and elegance of her letters; and then abſolutely fixed by her ſentiments, her attention, and her ſubmiſſion. Theſe were a balm to his ſoul, tormented by domeſtic, perſonal, and political chagrins. In theſe he obtained a relief from that wearineſs and wretchedneſs, which the pomps and pleaſures of the world had ſerved only to increaſe, while they promiſed to prevent or cure them. We do not find, that this illuſ-

trious lady was fond of faſhionable diverſions: her books and her work were the principal amuſements of her leiſure.

But it is time to proceed to our laſt point, namely, the uſefulneſs of Mental Acquiſitions to your comfort and felicity. And here it is worthy your obſervation, that the Moſt High, having formed his rational offspring for a happineſs more refined and noble than the indulgence of the ſenſes alone, has wiſely made the gratifications thence ariſing in a great meaſure momentary. To prolong theſe inferior enjoyments, is the laborious taſk of the ſlaves of appetite and fancy in league with each other. But as it is undertaken in oppoſition to the deſign of the Almighty, and proſecuted in defiance of his laws, it muſt ever be vain. They only fatigue themſelves in the attempt. From efforts beyond her ſcope and powers, Nature will always recoil. Satiated with external pleaſures, ſhe turns inward. Experiencing there a void, which the whole ſyſtem of matter cannot fill, ſhe is prompted by an innate ambition to aſpire after higher objects. Her ſpiritual faculties, and divine extraction, point her to the world

of ideas. From that, and from what may be called the Commerce of Minds, ſhe wiſhes to derive her chief ſatisfaction. But you will eaſily conceive, that ſuch commerce cannot be carried on to any extent, nor with any variety, without a competent ſtore of the goods proper to it; thoſe, I mean, which experience and reflexion, genius and reaſoning, diſcourſe and memory have accumulated and laid up in the writings of different ages, as in ſo many convenient repoſitories, for the uſe of all who are willing to avail themſelves of this better wealth. They who are not, muſt neceſſarily labour under much internal poverty. Accordingly, how do they ſtrain to ſupply the needful demands of converſation, when in company; and when alone, how do they ſtruggle to elude, becauſe they cannot content, the cravings of the immortal mind! To the want of this proviſion, and the incapacity of ſuſtaining the weight of their own ſpirits preſſing upon them in ſolitude, muſt we not principally impute their impatience for all manner of entertainments, that may help to fill up the painful blanks of time, without any conſiderable expence of

that which they can leaſt afford—thought? But this expedient is merely temporary, and extremely imperfect. Diverſion long continued is drudgery; and ſtill the ſoul falls back upon herſelf.

Now, if in the intervals of leiſure you can with reliſh repair to books, you need never be at a loſs. You may happily avoid, if you will, the toils of reſtleſs amuſement, and the ſighs of immoderate mirth. Excuſe this laſt expreſſion. Have you not ſometimes proved the truth of Solomon's remark, that "even in laughter the heart is ſorrowful?" Have you not now and then perceived a ſigh to ſteal from you, when oppreſſed and exhauſted by frequent burſts of merriment?—If ſhe who is in love with reading ſhould, on particular occaſions, be led into ſcenes of that kind, with what redoubled ardour will ſhe return to ſilence and ſtudy! From the noiſe, buſtle, and barrenneſs of modern converſation, with what exalted pleaſure will ſhe betake herſelf to the ſociety of the celebrated dead, or of admired authors yet alive, where all is ſtill, ſerene, and delightful! After being diſguſted with the nauſeous, or the meagre

diet, ſerved up in moſt companies, where low ſcandal, or mere town-talk, ſupply the place of urbanity and ſenſe; how rich and regaling will ſhe find that repaſt, which her library is always ready to furniſh!

There ſhe will not fail of meeting with food of every different flavour, whether of lighter or more ſolid ſubſtance, agreeable to her preſent inclination; at the ſame time that nothing is forced upon her, and ſhe is left at liberty, not only to vary the entertainment as often and as much as ſhe pleaſes, but alſo to riſe from it whenever ſhe will. Hiſtorians, Philoſophers, Orators, and Poets, the beſt writers of every claſs, within her compaſs, are ever prepared to gratify without conſtraint or ceremony her intellectual taſte. Nor will they take offence at any preference, which at any time ſhe may be diſpoſed to make. She can never intrude upon them at an improper ſeaſon, nor appear to leave them with abruptneſs: And when ſhe does leave them, inſtead of room for uneaſy retroſpect, the manner in which ſhe has been employed will be productive of ſelf-approbation. She will feel her ſoul nouriſhed and

ſtrengthened, her ſpirits cheared and elevated, or collected and compoſed. The duties of life ſhe will go about with freſh reſolution, and a quicker comprehenſion of what becomes her. To congenial minds her attachment will be increaſed. With them ſhe will enjoy, as often as ſhe has opportunity, ſentimental and friendly delight, the circulation of thought, and reciprocation of confidence,

"The feaſt of reaſon, and the flow of ſoul."

And theſe, my friends, are ſatisfactions which depend not on youth, nor on the advantages peculiar to it: ſatisfactions which, in ſome reſpects at leaſt, will grow with your growing years; and which, in every caſe, will ſurvive the tranſient flower of beauty. Let me again remind you of the period of its decay. Of that period you cannot be reminded too often.

When it arrives, thoſe hollow-hearted men, that for their own ends now ſwarm about you with every ſemblance of love or admiration, will diſperſe like flies at the

approach of winter. In a little they will forget you, as if you had never been; or remember you only to ſay to every one they meet, how much you are altered. But what words can paint the deſolation of her, who finds herſelf thus forſaken and deſpiſed, without any reſource in her own breaſt?

I think I ſee her flying to her glaſs, day after day, to obſerve whether that flatterer will prove more conſtant. At firſt ſhe is aſtoniſhed, ſhe is ſhocked, at the ſtupidity of thoſe men who can become inſenſible to a face or a form like her's? But in a little that once ſoothing glaſs, which was wont to tranſport her with the reflected image of herſelf, begins to withdraw its flatteries too. She is alarmed and depreſſed. She ſeeks conſolation from ſome low dependant, who, with a grave face and glozing accent, aſſures her ſhe is handſomer than ever; while the mercenary wretch ſecretly laughs her to ſcorn. Every artifice of dreſs, all the ſeduction of ornament, is ſtudied and practiſed with more exquiſite ſolicitude. She views herſelf on every ſide: the waſte ſeems repaired. Her ſpirits riſe; ſhe is overjoyed. With renewed

expectation ſhe ſallies forth: ſhe dances her uſual round: ſome one in pity tells her how well ſhe looks: the evening is paſt in triumph. She returns home exhauſted with the flutter. Next morning the mirror is conſulted again. She is pale, ſickly, faint; her eyes are ſunk; the wrinkles appear—more than ever. Again ſhe is ſtartled, terrified, falls into a rage. The ſtorm burſts on her domeſtics, ſpends itſelf, ſubſides. The uſual methods are tortured, to make her up; and if ſome new expedient is ſuggeſted, that can better diſguiſe nature, and deceive the beholder—what a diſcovery! Thus between the viciſſitudes of hope and fear, of exultation and deſpondence, on a ſubject to her weak unfurniſhed mind the moſt intereſting of all others, ſhe is miſerably toſſed; till by ſuch repeated and violent perturbation, conſpiring with the addition of years, ſhe is conſigned over to deſpair, the heart-overwhelming deſpair, of being ever praiſed more for thoſe unhappy charms, which ſhe at length perceives are beyond recovery loſt.—What young woman of reflection would not prevent ſuch ridiculous diſtreſs? But can you

think of any way to prevent it, ſo efficacious as turning betimes your principal attention to your better part? That even in this way you ſhall become wholly indifferent, about the decline of an appearance which uſed to give your friends as well as yourſelves pleaſure, I will not affirm. But if ſo high a ſtrain of philoſophy be hardly practicable, ſtill however I think you muſt acknowledge, that the advances of age will be ſupported much the more eaſily for ſuch preparation. In the mean while, how many vexations, that haraſs and diſtract the greater part of your ſex, will be thus obviated by you!

In truth, moſt of the grievances complained of by mortals are ſelf-created. They proceed from that fondneſs of fancy, which gives conſequence to trifles, or from thoſe guſts of paſſion, which produce agitation without cauſe. But next to the power of religion, can you imagine any means of avoiding both ſo probable, as the wiſe and calm purſuits to which I would now perſuade you? Permit me, my much-loved hearers, to ſucceed. Defer not, by the cultivation of your minds, as well as hearts, to lay in a ſtore of enjoy-

ment and comfort, ſuch as you can repair to in ſecret, when all abroad is unſolacing and inſipid.

Every thing external is haſtening to change and diſſolution. You yourſelves are gliding inſenſibly down the current of time. You are on your paſſage to eternity; and can you bear the thoughts of reſigning a paſſage as important as it is ſhort, to the blind impulſe of chance, caprice, and ignorance? Or ſuppoſe you are ſo far careful of conſequences, as to ſecure a ſafe arrival; can ye, like illiterate and incurious mariners, ſailing by ſome beautiful coaſt, be ſatisfied to hurry along, without attending to the various proſpects and numerous objects, which Nature and Art have ſpread out before you; or without taking advantage of the beſt aſſiſtance you can find on your voyage, to improve in whatever is inſtructive, ornamental, and praiſeworthy? Have ye forgotten, that, when landed on the bliſsful ſhore, your felicity will bear no inconſiderable proportion to your preſent attainments in knowledge; that the moſt enlarged underſtandings, where the diſpoſitions have been of a piece, will be

rewarded by the nobleſt diſcoveries, in ſhort, that they who ſhine now with the faireſt lights of wiſdom ſhall, like the more diſtinguiſhed ſtars of heaven, be crowned hereafter with ſuperior ſplendor?

SERMON IX.

On Female Piety.

1 Tim. ii. 10.

—Which becometh women profeſſing Godlineſs.

Prov. xxxi. 30.

Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, She ſhall be praiſed.

THE frailty of women has been frequently a topic of triumphant declamation. On this ſubject much unkind wit has been diſplayed; and many a dull ſarcaſm is daily added, and circulated with an air of conſcious ſatisfaction. Hardly can one go into a company of men, where licentiouſneſs of tongue paſſes for freedom of converſation, without hearing the poor women abuſed for their worthleſſneſs, or

weakneſs, or both. But ſuppoſing them particularly frail, is it noble to exult over them on that account, and in their abſence too, when they have not an opportunity of defending themſelves? Should not the ſtrong rather pity and ſupport the weak? Yet after all, how does it appear that any ſingular ſtrength of reſolution belongs to our ſex, or that yours ſtand chargeable with peculiar infirmity?

The loſs of virtue is, no doubt, often followed with extreme depravity in women. But is not the ſame thing to be ſeen among men; although it is not remarked with the ſame attention, or cenſured with equal rigour? If many unhappy females run into ſuch "exceſs "of riot, and ſuperfluity of naughtineſs," as ſeem to juſtify the obſervation, that there is nothing ſo profligate as a vicious woman; may it not be frequently imputed to their being driven almoſt to a ſtate of deſpair? Forſaken as they are by the wretches that ruined them, abandoned by their relations, if any they have, commonly dreading the ſcorn of their own ſex, and often too little conſidered by the virtuous part of ours; what can be expected, in general, from creatures who have put off the

modeſty of nature, and are propelled by evil habits, co-operating often with baſe aſſociates, and bitter poverty?—Do I then plead the cauſe of vice? God forbid. But I cannot endure that want of candour, which would aggravate the guilt and miſery of beings, who to us ſhould be objects of ſo much compaſſion; I ſay to Us, of whom many are the firſt authors of this very guilt and miſery, while the reſt are all likewiſe ſubject to go aſtray.

Here I ſhall probably be aſked, Does not the apoſtle Peter expreſsly ſtyle the woman the weaker veſſel? He does; but in the ſame ſenſe that thoſe veſſels are ſo ſtyled, which being of finer materials, or more delicate conſtruction, and therefore eaſily broken or hurt, are for that reaſon, and for the regard alſo which people have for them, uſed with particular tenderneſs. That this is his meaning is manifeſt from the paſſage referred to, where he ſays, "Give honour unto the wife as unto the weaker veſſel." Why honour on that ſcore, if the epithet Weaker is not to be underſtood as I have now, according to the beſt interpreters, explained it?

But does not St. Paul, ſome verſes after the

text from Timothy, obſerve, that "Adam was "not deceived, but the woman being deceived "was in the tranſgreſſion?" True: it does appear from the hiſtory, that "the ſer-"pent," as our apoſtle ſays elſewhere, "beguiled Eve through his ſubtilty;" and that the man, though aware of the deceit, was, by his fondneſs for his deluded yet ſtill lovely partner drawn into the ſame tranſgreſſion. But what was it that expoſed the woman to that ſnare by which ſhe was ſeduced? Paſſions, it muſt be owned, extremely culpable in their nature, and fatal in their conſequences; but not the paſſions for which her daughters have been indiſcriminately blamed. In reality, the reſolute ſpirit and perſevering vigilance, with which great numbers of women preſerve their honour, while ſo few men in compariſon are reſtrained by the laws of continence, ſeem to me no ſlight proof that the former poſſeſs a degree of fortitude well worthy of praiſe.

But what is all this to the purpoſe of our preſent meditation? Much every way. I meant it as my firſt argument in behalf of female Piety; and on what footing it ſtands I will proceed to ſhow, after remarking that the

perſons to whom our text from St. Paul is addreſſed, are by him ſuppoſed to profeſs a reſpect for religion,—"As becometh women "profeſſing Godlineſs:" a ſuppoſition we are willing to make in your favour, my beloved hearers; ſo far, I mean, as to render it unneceſſary to inculcate that profeſſion from thoſe general notions of truth and duty, which with a few exceptions, I do hope you readily acknowledge. Inſtead of this, our reaſoning and exhortations will turn chiefly on ſuch principles and facts as relate more immediately to your ſex, ſituation, and time of life, conſidered in conjunction with the character and manners of the age.

And now for the argument already ſuggeſted, you will be more ſenſible of its force by attending to the following obſervations; that the firmneſs, with which ſo many of you guard your virtue, being transferred to the practice of Piety at large, will, by God's aſſiſtance, contribute to render it eaſy and delightful; that the conſiderations of Religion will, in their turn, ſupport and chear you under the reſtraints of conſcience and decorum; that you will hence derive the mighty ſatisfaction

of the divine approbation amidſt the cenſures of the uncharitable, and the divine protection againſt the machinations of the ungodly; and, in the laſt place, that the injuſtice, unkindneſs, and treachery of the world, ſhould engage you to greater prudence, purity, and devotion.

As to the firſt, it is certain that the practice of real Piety requires no ſmall reſolution and perſeverance. Is it not likewiſe certain that in what concerns their reputation, many young women poſſeſs a large ſhare of theſe? Let them but apply this to the diſcharge of their duty as chriſtians, and the happieſt effects will enſue; uniformity, facility, and joy in religion. What cannot courage and conſtancy achieve? In the point to which I allude, you are often heroines. Your life is a ſeries of ſelf-denial. But ſelf-denial from right principles is the perfection of chriſtianity. Do but act on theſe principles throughout, and you ſhall one day walk with your Saviour in white: he will confeſs your names as worthy before his Father, and before his angels: you ſhall follow the Lamb whitherſoever he goeth, ſinging to your golden harps

a new ſong, expreſſive of ſignal triumph and praiſe.

It has been ſaid of women, and I believe with truth, that they are remarkably ſteady to their purpoſe. Let it be ſeen that you are ſo in what is good. And "let not your good be "evil ſpoken of," on account of any thing that might give ground to ſuſpect you controul your paſſions in one way only, and that too from no higher principle than the fear of ſhame. By a noble command of yourſelves in other points, where this conſideration cannot be ſuppoſed to operate ſo ſtrongly, make it appear that you are governed by religious as well as prudential motives.

We would not leſſen the influence of any one wiſe, or uſeful conſideration, from the ſide of this world: but we wiſh your minds to lie more open to the efficacy of the next. So far as mere reputation goes, it is much the ſame to a woman, whether the regularity of her conduct be the reſult of pious or of political maxims. But in the ſight of God, and at the bar of conſcience, how vaſt the difference! In that day when the ſecrets of all hearts ſhall be laid open, what will it avail you, if the

decency of your behaviour ſhould be found to have proceeded from no nobler ſpring than the deſire of ſaving appearances? Who can expreſs the horror of a female hypocrite at that all-revealing period, when, ſtript of every diſguiſe, ſhe ſhall be pointed out to the congregated univerſe as an infamous creature, whoſe ſoul was enſlaved to ſenſuality, at the very time that ſhe affected the ſtricteſt virtue, treated indiſcretion in others with the ſeverity due to vice alone, had no allowances to make for human frailty, and with ſupercilious diſdain looked down on many of her ſex not half ſo wicked as herſelf?

Let it be carefully remembered, that as, in what regards outward trials, the goſpel is literally the doctrine of the croſs; ſo, with reſpect to inward conflicts, it is properly the diſcipline of the paſſions. Here, in truth, the religion of a chriſtian muſt begin and end. What pity, my honoured pupils, if you who have that amazing power over the exterior of your deportment, if you who offer to a ſpotleſs name thoſe continual ſacrifices which your greateſt enemies cannot deny, ſhould after all loſe the reward of undiſſembled ſanc-

tity, by being excluded from that viſion of God, which Jeſus has promiſed to the pure in heart! What pity, in the mean while, that ſuch power is not more generally allowed to exert itſelf on the ample theatre of a life truly virtuous; and that ſuch ſacrifices ſhould not, by the conſolations of devotion, be ſweetened, conſecrated, and turned into ſo many ſources of ſublime enjoyment!

But this reminds me of having likewiſe ſaid, that the conſiderations of Religion will conduce mightily to ſupport and chear you under the reſtraints of ſobriety and decorum. In proportion as thoſe conſiderations are made more familiar, will theſe reſtraints become leſs painful, till at length they in a manner change their nature, and ſeem like ſilken bands, that even while they confine you, are as eaſy as they are ornamental.

Between all other philoſophy and the philoſophy of Jeſus, one glorious diſtinction is this; that the latter not only diſplays a higher ſtandard of moral excellence, but alſo communicates ſuperior powers of virtuous action. To the fainter concluſions of Reaſon it ſuperadds the bright diſcoveries of Faith. The

future world, with the great tranſactions of the ſupreme adminiſtration, which are introductory to it, are there unveiled. There the vanity, and withal the importance of the preſent ſtate, is unfolded. There divine pardon and eternal life, as "the gift of God through Jeſus Chriſt," are enſured and aſcertained to obedient believers. The hiſtory of the Redeemer is there exhibited with all the beauty of ſimplicity, and energy of truth; a hiſtory, my dear hearers, equally important to all that read it, and to thoſe that read it with a ſerious unprejudiced diſpoſition, unſpeakably affecting; a hiſtory which involves the moſt extenſive and laſting intereſts of human nature, and to ſuch as view it in that light carries with it, beyond all other writings, a vital, home-felt, and heart-awakening influence. The ingenuous breaſt, inflamed by the friendſhip, and penetrated by the ſpirit of Jeſus, burns with the love of virtue, and heaves with the hope of ſalvation. Jeſus is the pattern of virtue: gratitude is one of its worthieſt incentives, and faith, which is the fundamental principle of the whole ſyſtem, faith in the mercy and acceptance of the Univerſal Father, through the mediation of

his meritorious Son, by whom he is carrying on a ſcheme of grace, that comprehends all ſincere penitents of whatever name or nation, throughout all ſucceſſive ages—this Faith, I ſay, imparts to feeble and deſponding creatures a ſtrength and encouragement that no other ſyſtem could ever inſpire.

Nor are theſe ideas beyond the ordinary reach of female underſtanding. They depend not on a nice chain of reaſoning, nor on the abſtruſe reſearches of ſcience. How much ſoever they may have been diſguiſed by the dreams of the ſchools, to conceive them as they are ſet forth in ſcripture, maſculine intellects are by no means neceſſary. Connected with Facts the moſt aſtoniſhing to the imagination, and Sentiments the moſt touching to the heart, they ſeem to lie particularly level to the beſt characters among your ſex. In ſhort, to feel their tendency, and experience their operation, a modeſt, ſuſceptible, and affectionate mind is chiefly required.

Permit me to aſk you, as in the preſence of God, do ye in good earneſt believe in the Holy Ghoſt, in the catholic church, in the communion of ſaints, in the forgiveneſs of

ſins, in the reſurrection of the body, in the life everlaſting, in Him who is the reſurrection and the life, the all-ſufficient ſacrifice, the all-prevailing advocate, the meek, the lowly, and the loving maſter, as well as the awful and impartial judge? Do ye often by devout contemplation realize theſe, and the other wonderful objects of chriſtianity, together with the grand principles of natural religion? To both do ye frequently join the heaven-moving force of fervent prayer, the powerfully combined influences of public worſhip, and the ſweetly ſupporting communications of holy friendſhip? Then ſay, whether you can ever be at a loſs for motives to animate, or for aids to ſecond your endeavours after wiſdom and virtue? Surely no.

Wiſdom and virtue are beautiful forms, and for their own intrinſic worth unqueſtionably entitled to all poſſible love and veneration. But little acquainted with the human heart are they, who would build the morals of mankind on this ſingle baſis. Decency of character, dignity of conduct, the honours due to temperance, integrity, benevolence, magnanimity, and other qualities of that or-

der, are ideas as ſolid as they are refined, and which ought certainly to be cheriſhed by all who are capable of comprehending their moment. To offer to depreciate them is vile, and not more repugnant to reaſon than to ſcripture, where the beauties of holineſs are expreſsly named, and "whatſoever things "are venerable, lovely, and of good report," are, as mentioned in a former diſcourſe, recommended in ſo many words. But yet, on the other hand, conſidering the paſſions, diſorders, and debility of beings, ſituated as we are; to truſt the cauſe of righteouſneſs and truth to the ſole ſtrength of ſuch arguments—what is it, but hazarding the moſt valuable intereſts in the world on a bottom utterly unequal to ſo precious a freight?

A few ſelect ſpirits, more liberal and elevated than uſual, may, in their progreſs towards perfection derive ſome extraordinary aſſiſtances from theſe ſublimer ſpeculations; at leaſt when not under very difficult or delicate circumſtances of temptation. But what, think ye, would become even of them; much more, what would become of the far greater part, when immediately under ſuch circum-

ſtances, did not religion ſtep in to their aid with her more forcible and ſtriking ſanctions, founded on their hopes and fears for futurity, as theſe are connected with a ſenſe of the Almighty's inſpection, and a faith in the illuſtrious facts of revelation? How little in general were the philoſophers of antiquity themſelves influenced by the ſyſtem in queſtion, with whatever pomp they profeſſed, or with whatever eloquence they diſplayed it! Some of them, it is true, were men of great virtues, as well as great conceptions; while the reſt were ſtriking examples, how much eaſier it is to talk than to act well, and that to reform the world there is wanted a diviner power than reaſon alone.

With regard to the caſe now before us, it may be obſerved that thoſe young perſons, who have had the misfortune to be in a great meaſure left to the common notices of nature, go aſtray much more frequently, than others on whom the principles of Piety have been early and judiciouſly impreſſed.

When I ſay judiciouſly impreſſed, I mean to inſinuate, that many hopeful children have

been loſt, through the imprudent efforts of their well-meaning, but ill-informed parents, to make them good by ſevere confinement and conſtant admonition. Thoſe children alone will be truly good, and are likely to continue ſo, who are at once enamoured of their duty, awed by their Maker, and devoted to the ſecuring of that "life and immortality which "are brought to light through the goſpel."

Here I cannot help recollecting a moſt memorable inſtance, wherein a much celebrated youth was guarded againſt the indulgence of appetite by the power of religion. I ſpeak of Joſeph, when tempted by the wife of Potiphar. Conſider the complicated ſnare that was laid for his innocence; probably the blandiſhments of beauty; certainly the repeated, preſſing, and paſſionate ſolicitations of an artful woman, of his miſtreſs, who, if ſhe pleaſed, could eaſily procure his farther advancement; the opportunities of privacy; the proſpect of cloſe concealment; his time of life; his plentiful condition; thoſe warm affections, that ſtrong ſenſibility, which the ſequel of his ſtory ſhows to have been natural to him; the ex-

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treme danger manifeſtly attending his refuſal, I mean all the miſchiefs to be dreaded from the reſentment and violence of a proud but fond female reſiſted, diſappointed, enraged, who would not fail, however falſely, to repreſent the unbounded confidence of a generous maſter abuſed; and, finally, thoſe miſchiefs falling at one blow upon a dependent and a ſtranger, whoſe proſperity in that family had no doubt rendered him the object of envy to ſome, and whoſe proteſtations in his own favour would never be believed by others to the diſadvantage of a woman of her rank and fortune. Such was the ſnare. And what was it that enabled our amiable hero to conquer it? The hiſtory will inform you. "He "refuſed, and ſaid unto his maſter's wife, "Behold, my maſter wotteth not what is with "me in the houſe, and he hath committed "all that he hath to my hand. There is none "greater in this houſe than I; neither hath "he kept back any thing from me but thee, "becauſe thou art his wife: how then can I "do this great wickedneſs, and ſin againſt "God?" Excellent young man! From a crime, to which ſo many allurements con-

curred to incite him, he ſtarts back with horror; ſo ſtrongly are his natural feelings of gratitude and probity ſeconded by a reverence for the Omniſcient; "How then can I do "this great wickedneſs, and ſin againſt God?" —No, my ſiſters, there is not in the world ſuch a preſervative from vice as the fear of God. Temptations, by which human reſolutions alone have been frequently foiled, are often overcome by the ſame reſolutions when enforced by religious faith.

From theſe remarks you will plainly perceive, that what we wiſh for you is not a victory over your paſſions hardly gained, and at the expence of your tranquillity; but a ſacred ſelf-poſſeſſion, a certain diviner controul of your own wills, that ſhall diſtinguiſh you in the ſight of him who "deſireth truth in the "inward parts." A ſentiment this, that ſeems conformable to the beſt conceptions of nature; ſince we find the power which according to the pagan creed repreſented both wiſdom and fortitude, was ſuppoſed to be of your ſex. On the ſame principle does the wiſeſt of men ſpeak ſo often of the former in the feminine gender. Thus at leaſt did ancient genius treat the women

with reſpect. It is particularly obſervable that of republican ſtates, where that genius commonly appeared moſt eminent, the ſage legiſlators preſcribed to females a peculiar gravity and ſimplicity of manners; ſo different were their ideas of what was becoming from thoſe of modern times!

But I added farther that, from the ſtudy of inward purity as well as outward decorum, even that purity which the goſpel ſo ſtrongly enforces, you will reap the mighty ſatisfaction of the Divine Approbation amidſt the cenſures of the uncharitable, and the Divine Protection againſt the machinations of the ungodly. Hard enough, it muſt be owned, is the caſe of women, as to the general reflexions made on their deportment. If they behave with reſerve, they are pronounced prudiſh; if with frankneſs, bold; if with that juſt temperament of both which is the proper medium, capricious and uncertain. What ſhall they do? What can they do, but hold the middle way, with that attention to the rules of caution on one ſide, and of affability on the other, which times, places, and perſons

ſeem to require ; "committing their cauſe to him that judgeth righteouſly," and truſting for their ſafety to him that never forſakes the virtuous ?

Such a reſpect for human judgment, as avoids giving occaſion of cenſure, is undoubtedly right in every individual of ſociety; of your ſex eſpecially, whoſe reputation is of ſo nice a contexture. But while for this purpoſe a chriſtian woman purſues, as nearly as ſhe can, the path of prudence ; what internal ſerenity does ſhe enjoy, by following at the ſame time the direction of principle, that higheſt and happieſt guide of life ! To ſay the Truth, there may be ſituations, wherein the latter appears to be left the ſole guide, ſo impoſſible is it for the former to find a way through the labyrinth. In this caſe you can have but one reaſonable care ; which is, to do what conſcience charges as your duty. In every caſe, that muſt be your principal care. In making it ſo, there will be this great advantage amongſt many others, that you will every day grow leſs anxious about any thing elſe. The caſe of mind, the gaiety of heart

reſulting from ſuch a conduct, are not to be expreſſed.

If the world ſhould approve, it is well. The approbation of the beſt people, at leaſt, will give you a real pleaſure; and the beſt people are naturally candid. If the world ſhould condemn, and even the candid Few, which is by no means impoſſible, ſhould be led by miſrepreſentation, or by miſtake, to join in the ſentence; ſtill however you will have the comfort of not having deſerved it. And from this inferior tribunal you will alſo have the felicity of appealing to that which is ſupreme and infallible, with the humble aſſurance of being juſtified there through the powerful interpoſition of an advocate, whom no paſſion or miſapprehenſion can bias. At the ſame time too you will have the conſolation to hope, that ſooner or later, he in whom you truſt "will bring forth your right-"eouſneſs as the light, and your judgment "as the noon-day." Seldom or never, I think, does a perſevering virtue fail of breaking out with freſh beauty, and augmented luſtre, from thoſe clouds with which calumny may have obſcured it; even as the vernal

ſun by purſuing his career, ſhines forth at laſt with a kind of victorious ſplendor, that diſpels the remaining damps of winter, delights the eye, and inſpires the heart of every beholder.

But ſuppoſe the worſt, that the erroneous multitude ſhould continue to load you with unmerited reproach; I am not afraid to ſay that you are happy ſtill, if you know how to avail yourſelves of the ſupports of religion, particularly a ſenſe of the Almighty's Approbation. What ought to diſcourage her who can triumph in this, and likewiſe in that which is immediately connected with it, an aſſurance of the Almighty's Protection?

Nothing can be more certain than that your ſex is, on every account, entitled to the ſhelter of ours. Your ſoftneſs, weakneſs, timidity, and tender reliance on man; your helpleſs condition in yourſelves, and his ſuperior ſtrength for labour, ability for defence, and fortitude in trial; your tacit acknowledgment of theſe, and frequent application for his aid in ſo many winning ways, concur to form a plea, which nothing can diſallow or withſtand but brutality. Appetite indeed is

naturally brutal: untamed by religion, unchained by reaſon, what havock does it not commit? Nothing can be more wild or ferocious than lawleſs deſire. How often, alas! does it diſfigure and degrade minds otherwiſe adorned with very valuable qualities! Have we not ſeen men, who in a ſober mood were open to the tendereſt Feelings of humanity, incapable of any thing unjuſt or diſhonourable, calm, and pliant to good advice; who yet, in the rebellion of their blood, were as ungovernable and fierce as any beaſt of the foreſt, broke through all reſtraint, and to gratify the paſſion that impelled them, ruſhed on crimes utterly repugnant to the beſt ſentiments of their hearts? Need I tell you that from ſuch men your virtue is in danger, and by ſo much the more by how much the qualities juſt named are, when allowed to operate, particularly engaging? But the fact is, that, being inlaid in the conſtitution, they do operate frequently, and never perhaps more than immediately after thoſe unhappy deviations, for which ſomething within whiſpers the neceſſity of making every poſſible atonement. It is in this way that thoſe good-natured but

unhappy men keep themſelves and one another in countenance, and often ſteal into your affection. Yet theſe are by no means the worſt enemies of womankind.

It is your ſmooth, cool, complimental libertines, who have ſteeled their breaſts by a ſyſtem, whom the boaſted principles, or rather no-principles of infidelity, have raiſed to a glorious contempt of all laws human and divine, delivered from the vulgar conceit of immortality, and enabled to conquer the little weakneſſes of nature, with the ignoble prejudices of education, which happened to be on the ſide of juſtice, honour, ſympathy;—it is ſuch men, my fair ones, ſuch flagitious and obdurate wretches, whoſe wiles, ſhould you chance to be thrown in their way, you have moſt reaſon to dread. And believe me, they abound every where. From you indeed they will carefully conceal the enormity of their characters, and the blackneſs of their opinions; till by gaining your confidence they can inſinuate the laſt with advantage, ſo as to take off your apprehenſions of the firſt, and blunt the edge of your reſolutions. A ſenſe of piety, the love of virtue,

a regard to reputation, the fear of conſequences, every principle borrowed from this world and the next, they are well aware would be alarmed and excited, were they to diſcloſe their deſigns, or explain their ideas at once, without preparation or preface.—But I will not attempt to unfold the myſtery of iniquity, in which they wrap themſelves, and work unſuſpected. Let it remain involved in its native darkneſs and horror; which cannot however hide it from the eye of Heaven, whoſe hotteſt vengeance ſhall one day overtake and blaſt it.

Your ſafety, I ſaid before, lies in retreat and vigilance, in ſobriety and prudence, in virtuous friendſhip and rational converſation, in domeſtic, elegant, and intellectual accompliſhments: I add now, in the Guardianſhip of Omnipotence, as that which muſt give efficacy to all the reſt; but which can only be obtained by ſomething more and better than them all, I mean, True Religion. What reaſon have you to hope for a privilege ſo great, if you do not aſk it? What cauſe could you have to complain; if your righteous Creator, on whom every conſidera-

tion ought to teach you dependance, were to leave you to yourſelves amidſt thoſe dangerous attacks, or artful ſnares, which you preſumptuouſly imagine you could reſiſt by your own ſtrength, or elude by your caution? That humility which does not depreſs, as chriſtian humility never can, is the beſt means of ſecurity. She who is moſt ſenſible of her hazard, is moſt likely to be on her guard. She who perceives her own imbecility, will be glad to invoke a higher power. Nor will the Parent of all be deaf to one of his reaſonable offspring, who, apprehenſive of the difficulties to which her frame and ſituation expoſe her, heartily implores his help.

Vain very often is the help of man, even when afforded in its utmoſt extent. What then muſt be the caſe, when it is not only not afforded, but when he who ought to protect is bent to deſtroy? To whom ſhall young creatures of your ſex, little lambs, innocent, gentle, fearful, undefended, beſet by ravenous lions, or "by wolves in "ſheeps' cloathing;"—to whom ſhall they flee, but to the Shepherd of Iſrael? And

will he, think ye, reject or abandon them; he who has promiſed to "gather the lambs "with his arm, and to carry them in his "boſom;" he who has always ſhown himſelf more eſpecially concerned for objects of diſtreſs and deſtitution, the poor, the priſoner, the ſtranger, the oppreſſed, the widow, and fatherleſs, and ſuch as have none to help them; in a word, he whoſe providence is then neareſt, and whoſe aſſiſtance is then readieſt, when his creatures are moſt forſaken by others?

To obtain the divine interpoſition, it is urged by the Pſalmiſt as a prevailing argument, that he was unprotected and deſolate. "O be not far from me: for trouble is nigh "at hand, and there is none to help me. I "looked on my right-hand, and beheld, but "there was no man that would know me: "refuge failed me; no man cared for my "ſoul. I cried unto thee, O Lord: I ſaid, "Thou art my refuge." The common Father "hears the young ravens when they cry "unto him;" and are early left by their hard-hearted dams. Are not ye better than many ravens? "Can a woman forget her

"ſucking child, that ſhe ſhould not have "compaſſion on the ſon of her womb?" ſays God by the prophet. He ſpeaks of it as a monſtrous thing, and ſcarce credible in any. Can ſhe forget—She, in the ſingular Number. The anſwer is remarkable: "Yea, "they may forget"—They, in the plural; confeſſing it poſſible, that more than one ſuch wretch may be found amongſt the dregs of nature. "Can a woman forget her ſucking "child? Yea, They may forget, yet I will "not forget thee." Can you figure any thing more tender and ſoothing? Can you heſitate a moment to throw yourſelves on "the ever-"laſting arms, on his right-hand, who rides "on the heavens for your help, on his excel-"lency in the ſky?" Or having ſo done, can you harbour a doubt of your ſafety, while "your place of defence is the munition of "rocks?"

But to proceed to our laſt argument: let the injuſtice, unkindneſs, and treachery of the world, engage you to greater Prudence, Purity, and Devotion. Any natural or any amiable tye, by which you are or may be bound, God forbid that I ſhould ſeek to

ſlacken. Moderate affections for proper objects you are allowed, you are called to indulge. By ſuch means you will fill your places in ſociety, or be in the way to fill them; at the ſame time that you will enjoy the beſt thing in human life, the friendly feelings of the heart. But ſhall I repeat once more, what has in one ſhape or another been ſaid ſo often, that whenever theſe are ill directed, or carried too far, they are ſure to entangle in guilt and diſquietude? Now to prevent, as much as poſſible, the wandering of your paſſions, the Almighty makes uſe of the paſſions of others. To bring good out of evil is the glory of his government. The worthleſſneſs of thoſe who have abuſed their freedom, he permits as a warning to you, no leſs than a puniſhment to them.

If men will endeavour to deſpoil that virtue which they ſhould cheriſh, to corrupt thoſe minds which they ſhould improve, in a word, to ruin that ſex whoſe honour and welfare are in a great meaſure entruſted with them; ſhould not ſuch baſeneſs fill you with diſdain and abhorrence? Can any of you be ſo mean, ſo ſurpaſſing mean, as to doat on

the traitors? Even where their aim is not deſtruction, where merely for amuſement they flatter or ſoothe, ſhould ye ſuffer yourſelves to be ſeduced into fondneſs? How fooliſh to be taken with thoſe little ſuperficial attentions, that are ſo eaſily learnt in the ſchool of faſhion, and ſo frequently practiſed to hide a hollow, or diſguiſe an unfeeling ſoul?

Are ye ignorant of its being an eſtabliſhed ſyſtem among men of gaiety and pleaſure, that your ſex have no principles; that you are deſigned only to ſerve their purpoſes; and that, when you refuſe to do ſo, it is mere pride or groſs diſſimulation? Can ye think of this, and not be offended? Will ye continue to prefer ſuch characters to the ſober, ſedate, and ſentimental?

You often behold the wrecks of beauty that has been blaſted, and of innocence that has been betrayed. Providence allows thoſe miſerable beings to carry their effrontery ſo far as to appear without ſhame in every public place, the monuments of male falſhood as well as female infatuation; and can ye fail of being impreſſed with ſalutary terror?

Can ye reſtrain the ſpirit of indignant virtue from darting out on thoſe men that, in your company, dare to ſpeak a language unfit for you to hear? Should not your eyes at leaſt make them ſenſible of the affront offered to your ears? And if they are hardened enough not to be aſhamed, does it not become you ever after to ſhun their ſight, as you would ſhun a bear or a fatyr? I am ſure you will think ſo, if you conſult either the dignity of your ſex, or the purity of your minds.

Love grafted on eſteem, or fed by it, is a juſt and noble principle. But how has it been diſgraced by worthleſs pretenders! Join, my ſiſters, with all your power to vindicate its honours. Let the ſanctity of your conduct ſerve, as much as poſſible, to recal the paſſion from empty form and criminal indulgence, from the blind admiration of an outſide, and the ſhort-lived gratification of youthful deſire, to a genuine, holy, and enlightened affection; ſuch as ſpringing chiefly from a ſympathy of honeſt and generous hearts, ſhall flouriſh when fancy, youth, and beauty, are no more.

If women will marry men of bad morals, if from whatever motive they will manifeſtly endanger their own ſalvation, by forming ſo intimate a connexion with thoſe who betray a total neglect of theirs; what can we ſay either for religion or the ſex, that will make any impreſſion on thoſe who are prejudiced againſt both? What can ſhe plead that accepts without ſcruple the hand of a man, who is ſeldom or ever ſeen in a place of worſhip, and whoſe companions are known to be profane or licentious? Is this to act, in the greateſt concern of life, like a perſon of principle?

It is a common complaint, nor can the fact be denied, that moſt of our young gentlemen now a days entirely diſregard religious inſtitutions. But how can it be expected they ſhould do otherwiſe, ſo long as they find themſelves, in general, no way the leſs acceptable to the ladies, for ſuch faſhionable impiety? What a ſcandal in "women pro-"feſſing Godlineſs!"

Amidſt ſo much diſorder, and ſo many ſnares on all hands, what can be ſo wiſe for you, my chriſtian friends, as to take

refuge more and more in the ſanctuary of Devotion?—Let us not diſſemble the truth. The greater part of either ſex ſtudy to prey on one another. The world, in too many inſtances, is a theatre of war between men and women. Every ſtratagem is tried, and every advantage taken, on the ſide of both. On the ſide of the former, ſtrength and daring are joined to art and ambition, in which the latter abound. To make a truce they often meet. Even preliminaries towards a peace are often propoſed. Individuals paſs over to the camp of the enemy, and are reconciled. But what ſhall we ſay of the contending powers at large? Methinks they reſemble this and a neighbouring kingdom, between which a general truce is always ſhort, and a national peace never ſecure.

To many young women the preacher will ſeem as one that mocks. The men they conſider as their beſt friends; and a laſting union is what they long for as the height of happineſs. An union, by ſome means or other, will probably take place. And if it ſhall, to know that it proved laſting, entire, and happy, as happy as the preſent ſtate permits,

would, you may be well aſſured, give the preacher pleaſure. But if from this, or any imaginable connexion upon earth, you hope for compleat felicity; your hopes will be vain. Imperfect yourſelves, you have no right to expect perfection from men. In the moſt agreeable attachments, you will ſtill find a mixture. The beſt characters will ſometimes ſay, or do that, which ſhall occaſion pain; daily intercourſe will dull the reliſh of delight; and diſagreeable accidents, but eſpecially ſevere diſtreſs, will not improve the taſte for it. Devotion, dearly beloved, Devotion will ever be your ſureſt and ſweeteſt reſource. "Acquaint yourſelves "therefore now with God, and be at peace."

Even now, I doubt not, ſome of you perceive that all beſide is uncertain and unſatisfactory. Your father and mother have forſaken you by death; or, which is far worſe, by unnatural cruelty, or horrible ſelfiſhneſs. You have not perhaps in the world a friend to ſupply their place: Or if you have, you cannot but know that human friendſhips are often fallacious, and like other human comforts always precarious. Every thing in na-

ture is ſubject to viciſſitude; and nothing more uſual than for men to adopt a different deportment as their circumſtances or intereſts, their opinions or humours, vary. There is but one immutable friend, "a friend that "ſticks cloſer than a brother," a lover, or a parent. "He is the ſame yeſterday, and to "day, and for ever. He will never leave "you: he will never forſake you." He has engaged himſelf by his promiſe; and "he "is not man that he ſhould lie, neither the "ſon of man that he ſhould repent."

I have often thought that, in ſome reſpects, there is not any creature ſo forlorn, or expoſed, as a young woman, beautiful, unexperienced, ſingle, almoſt wholly friendleſs, bred to affluence, left in dependance, perhaps in indigence, of which ſome wretch curſt with wealth is willing to avail himſelf for the vileſt ends. While I paint ſuch a ſituation, who does not ſee the need of Piety? What remains for this pretty ſufferer, but to hold faſt her innocence at all adventures, and look up to him "with whom the fatherleſs find mer-"cy."——'Protect me, O my heavenly Fa-'ther, my only ſure and never-failing friend;

'protect thy poor, dependant, helpleſs crea-
'ture. From this wilderneſs of life I lift
'up my eyes to Thee; to thy throne of pity I
'ſtretch out my arms for ſuccour. Behold, I
'am needy, and feeble, and full of affliction.
'I tread among ſnares; I tremble for fear.
'But Thou art merciful. Save me, O Lord,
'moſt mighty; ſave me from evil men, from
'vain companions, from folly, from myſelf.
'My wants ſupply, moſt gracious: my weak-
'neſs ſtrengthen: for ever guard the virtue
'by Thee implanted. Thou art the guide of
'my youth; lead me in a plain path, becauſe
'of my enemies. Let none have power to
'hurt me; may ſome have the goodneſs to
'ſupport my ſteps. Send down wiſdom from
'thy holy heavens, that ſhe may labour with
'me continually, and ſweetly counſel me in
'all my doings. In Thee, O God, in Thee
'alone have I put my truſt: let me never be
'confounded. Be my God for ever and ever,
'and my guide even unto death. I aſk it for
'the ſake of my Divine Redeemer. Amen.'

SERMON X.

On Female Piety.

1 Tim. ii. 10.

—Which becometh women profeſſing Godlineſs.

Prov. xxxi. 30.

Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, She ſhall be praiſed.

DEVOTION, my beloved hearers, is a buſineſs of too much importance and dignity to be yet diſmiſſed from our meditation. What has been already offered on this head, is but a ſmall part of that which I would recommend to your attention. From a former hint you will readily conceive, that to preſent you here with a regular ſyſtem of piety is not my deſign. Such an attempt

were ſuperfluous. Of the ſpiritual kind there are books innumerable, in which you will meet with all that can be ſaid on the ſubject in general. The Inducements to Religion, which are more immediately derived from your ſex and ſituation, together with thoſe Exerciſes and thoſe Effects of it, that concern you more particularly, are the points to which my plan properly confines me.

I will begin this diſcourſe by removing a bar, which has been thrown in our way by ſuch as have appeared fond of every opportunity to depreciate the better half of the human ſpecies. The devotion of women has been conſidered as nothing more than the paſſion of love directed to a divine object, when in reality they longed for an inferior one, or happened to be diſappointed in their wiſhes: an opinion which has given occaſion to ſome wit and more ridicule.

It ſeems to have proceeded chiefly from two cauſes; the amorous ſtyle which has by too many female pens been adopted into devotional writings; and the multitudes of young women who, denied originally the opportunity of indulging their natural inclinations, or

afterwards croſſed in the purſuit of them, have flung themſelves headlong into the gloomy retreats of a miſtaken piety, where they have been taught to offer at a heavenly ſhrine thoſe fires which were not ſuffered to burn freely elſewhere.

But now on the former circumſtance I would obſerve, that the language of love has not, ſo far as I know, been admitted into books of devotion by female more frequently than by male authors; and that, in this practice, both have probably thought themſelves warranted by the example of Solomon in his well-known Song; a compoſition, of which I muſt needs ſay, that how naturally ſoever it came from a monarch of his character, in thoſe earlier days of eaſtern imagination and eaſtern ardour, it ſhould by no means be made a model for chriſtian writers. In the New Teſtament, although produced from the ſame region, we find very little of this ſort, and that little in the chaſteſt and pureſt ſtrain: at the ſame time that there we are expreſsly required and taught, "to worſhip God who is a "ſpirit in ſpirit and in truth." But when we diſapprove of the practice as indiſcreet, muſt

we condemn it too as ſenſual; or becauſe in ſome it may have been the ebullition of a laſcivious fancy, ſhall we pronounce it to be ſo in all? Certain it is, that among ſuch as have uſed it, there have been not a few eminently diſtinguiſhed by the purity of their manners.

In the caſe of thoſe numerous votaries to the church of Rome, who by violence or craft, deſpondence or ſuperſtition, are immured in convents; what can be more natural, more reaſonable, or in truth more neceſſary, than that being deprived of the pleaſures of this world, they ſhould aſk conſolation from the next? Or if finding it impoſſible to cultivate one of the ſtrongeſt propenſities of the human heart, by that kind of commerce which Nature intended, can they be juſtly blamed for turning to an object, whoſe infinite excellence ſhall furniſh endleſs ſcope for the beſt ſentiments and nobleſt affections of the ſoul, thoſe that are immediately connected with piety: Will not the ſame way of reaſoning be applicable to women living in the world? I apprehend, it will.

But, in reality, the opinion we now examine would reflect no diſhonour on feminine

devotion, did not thoſe who entertain it proceed upon a low idea of the paſſion referred to. Whatever hold that paſſion, for purpoſes apparently wiſe, may take at firſt of the animal part of our frame, they are utter ſtrangers to its genuine character, who do not know that it is capable of riſing to the utmoſt refinement. By pleading the cauſe of Virtuous Love, I ſhall be able to prove its connexion with that which is Divine to be founded in nature; I mean in cultivated nature, where a ſenſe of the Divinity obtains. As virtuous love operates on both the ſexes pretty nearly alike, what I am going to obſerve of its effects on the men may, I believe, be juſtly applied to the impreſſions produced by it on the women.

A man ſees in ſome public place a great number of young perſons to whom he never ſpoke. He ſurveys them all. He is ſtruck with one who is really leſs beautiful than ſeveral others preſent, and who is ſo even in his eyes: in her favour he decides at once. It is a common caſe: how ſhall we account for it? I conceive thus: Every countenance expreſſes, or is thought to expreſs, a character peculiar to itſelf; and that which correſponds moſt with

our particular taſte in the way of temper, behaviour, underſtanding, we neceſſarily and ſpontaneouſly prefer. By this character therefore, whether real or imaginary, we are determined. As was hinted in a former diſcourſe, it is the ſoul we ſeek. With mind only can mind unite. That which is preſented to our eyes attracts us merely as an image of that which they cannot perceive. Our ſenſes may be ſaid to tie the knot; but, ſtrictly ſpeaking, the knot is formed in the ſoul. Our ſenſes are properly the vehicles of our affection; but to that affection they ſtill act in ſubordination. It is ſupreme. Its power is indeed ſo great, that were the gratification of the ſenſes, in the paſſion we are now conſidering, to interfere with the intereſt of our nobler part, or with this exalted ſentiment which conſtitutes its joy, they would be ſacrificed without heſitation. To virtuous love the ſpirit of ſacrifice is eſſential. What hazards, hardſhips, loſſes, pains, has not this generous attachment encountered, with pleaſure and even with ecſtacy; happy in manifeſting its zeal by the moſt arduous proofs! To mention but one inſtance amongſt ten

thouſand, and that recorded in Holy Writ; we are told, that "Jacob ſerved ſeven years "for Rachel, and that they ſeemed to him "but a few days." Why? "For the love he "had to her."

But now ſuppoſe the man we have juſt imagined, to cheriſh with fondneſs the ſudden impreſſion made upon him by a certain appearance; to be introduced to the lady, and to admire her more and more for thoſe internal qualities, which from that appearance he preſumes her to poſſeſs. With her looks too he is every day more deeply ſmitten, but ſtill as they are the fancied picture of her mind. This ideal form follows him every where. Buſineſs, company, amuſement, he could not endure but for the thoughts of her, which are for ever intermingling. Her converſation, her ſmiles, her approbation, even the ſlighteſt marks of her regard, are to him happineſs unequalled, and ſuch as can only be excelled by the entire poſſeſſion of the endearing object. He purſues, he obtains it. And now ſuppoſe him to diſcover, that the character he uſed to contemplate with tranſport was merely imaginary: that ſhe is abſolutely deſtitute of the

diſpoſitions, the ſentiments, in one word, the ſoul which he had fondly figured——Need I ſpeak the reſt? Ah, what diſappointment and miſery! Where now is his love? Where the ſacred, fervent, elevated paſſion, he ſo lately foſtered as the felicity of his life! Intellectual and moral beauty he chiefly ſought. He finds it not: and becauſe he does not find it, what happens? His very ſenſes, though remaining conſtitutionally the ſame, revolt, are diſguſted, and chilled. The enchanting face enchants no more: and why? Becauſe it no longer reflects the image that inflamed his breaſt. A fool or a tyrant ſtarts up there, where ſenſe and ſoftneſs ſeemed to reſide.

But now let us reverſe this unhappy part of the ſcene, and ſuppoſe that the lady's real character anſwers to her appearance; that, inſtead of loſing, ſhe gains by a more intimate acquaintance; in ſhort, that certain hidden graces which no feature, form, or air could fully expreſs, diſplay themſelves as circumſtances riſe to call them forth: what will be the conſequence? That the youthful ardour of our lover will increaſe? No, but a better ardour will; that of rational eſteem, ſentimental com-

placence, and ſelf-congratulation. The other, as he advances in life, will gradually abate, and at length vaniſh. What then? Will his tenderneſs vaniſh, or his affection abate? By no means. We have ſeen that from the beginning it was the love of her mind principally. It is ſo now more than ever. It has leſs emotion; it has more ſolidity: it is leſs earthly; it is more divine. It is love mellowed into friendſhip. What ſhall I ſay? It is the fineſt feeling of the human heart. And the attraction grows, partly by habit, partly by the increaſe of thoſe qualities that cauſed it on her ſide, and partly by the improvement of good diſpoſitions on his. The tumultuous and irregular pleaſures to which perhaps, before he knew her, he was addicted, have now loſt their reliſh. The calm, yet intereſting joys, he taſtes in her ſociety, occupy all his leiſure. From every engagement, whether of the buſy or idle kind, he returns to her with new delight, glad to ſhake off the interrupting world, and impatient when it compels him to any long abſence. By the lovely ſympathies of her gentle boſom, his cares are ſoothed, his labours ſoftened, and his loſſes rendered eaſy.

Is he ſucceſsful? His ſucceſs is triumph, from this thought, 'I ſhall be able to make her 'more happy whom my ſoul loveth.' Is ſhe in pain or ſickneſs? does her health decline? Will this man look on unconcerned? Ah! no: he will hang over her bed of diſtreſs with augmented fondneſs, with an anguiſh more charming than all the luxury of ſenſual indulgence. Is her bloom withered? are the allurements of youth gone? Will he grow indifferent? No, no! in his eye ſhe is handſome ſtill. In all ſhe ſays, and does, and looks, he ſtill beholds, and ſtill admires, the unfaded and unfading beauties of her ſoul.

If any profane or inſenſible wretch, prone "to ſpeak evil of the things which he knows "not," and which he cannot know, ſhould affect to treat this repreſentation with ridicule, as viſionary and unnatural, I can only pity him. You who are diſpoſed to be ingenuous and candid, may reſt aſſured that it is taken from life. Thoſe whom it reſembles will own it is true, while they find it imperfect. But imperfect as it is, it will, if I miſtake not, be ſufficient to prove the point for which I have produced it.

Abſtract, my ſiſters, from that regard to perſon, which in the pureſt paſſion between the ſexes we have acknowledged to be an original ingredient, but which we have found to be only an inferior ingredient, and one whoſe operation is ſoon diminiſhed; abſtract from this, and what is there in all the reſt, that may not be traced to the love of excellence? But what elſe, I would gladly know, is the leading idea in the love of God? Between that Firſt of Beings, and the moſt accompliſhed of his creatures, the diſtance is indeed infinite. The faireſt virtues we ſee around us are at beſt but faint emanations from him, who is "the "perfection of beauty." But from theſe and from the admiration they inſpire, it is that we are led up to him, as by ſo many pleaſing though ſcattered ſtreams to their fountain.

And now ſuppoſe that a young woman, poſſeſſed with the belief of this higheſt excellence, is diſappointed in her proſpects of an agreeable union with one of our ſex: ſhe turns her thoughts to heaven. She contemplates truth and rectitude, wiſdom and goodneſs, power, mercy, and faithfulneſs, in their ſource. She conſiders them as all work-

ing together for her good; ſhe ſees them ſhining through the cloud of diſappointment. rom this cloud ſhe hears, as it were, her Maker thus addreſſing her: 'My daughter, 'give me thy heart. Thy ſupreme affection 'none upon earth can deſerve. Human at-'tainments are all defective; human regards 'are often inſincere. Put not your truſt in 'the ſon of man: he may deceive, or he 'may change, or he may not be able to pro-'tect you. But of this kind you have nothing 'to fear from your Creator. Throw thyſelf, 'my child, on my friendſhip.'—She is not diſobedient to the heavenly call. She proſtrates herſelf in the preſence of the Moſt High. To him ſhe devotes that heart which he formed; to him ſhe pours it out with freedom. She adores the perfections of his nature; the frailties of her own, with all the failings of her life paſt, ſhe penitently confeſſes; her tears flow. Her mind is relieved; conſolation pervades her ſoul: out of weakneſs ſhe waxes ſtrong. Virtue never appeared to her half ſo fair; Religion riſes before her in full majeſty; everlaſting objects open to her view; ſolitude and ſilence begin to charm. Con-

verſe with her God, with her Saviour, with her Bible, with Herſelf, yields a pleaſure hitherto unknown. In the midſt of ſociety ſhe longs for its return; from the diſſipation of amuſements ſhe retreats with joy; ſelf-denial for the ſake of God, and goodneſs, loſes its name; her duty is her delight; the ſpirit of ſacrifice is felt in all its nobleneſs. She is great, and ſhe is happy.—Say, ye ſons of raillery; ye ſcoffers at female devotion, declare: what is there in all this, unnatural, irrational, or in any reſpect unſuitable to the beſt conceptions of the human mind?

From what I have ſaid let none imagine, that I mean to inſinuate female devotion may not be found in married as well as ſingle life; or that a woman will not have recourſe to piety, unleſs ſhe be driven to it by diſappointed love. This, like every other diſtreſs, and more perhaps than any other, will prompt a young perſon of reflexion to turn to the Almighty. But of worth or ingenuity thoſe ſurely have no true feeling, who think that the character of the Supreme cannot from a heart well diſpoſed command an affectionate vene-

ration in any condition, or under any circumſtance whatſoever.

That in female nature there are certain Qualities, which ſeem peculiarly calculated, by the grace of God, to diſpoſe it for the reception and culture of this divine principle, I will proceed in the next place to demonſtrate.

That your ſex are, in a particular degree, ſuſceptible of all the tender affections, will, I preſume, be allowed by moſt. Their propenſity to thoſe, with which the paſſion of love is more immediately complicated, has been charged upon them by many as matter of reproach. What to me appears in general to do them honour, is the warmth of their attachments, and their aptitude to be affected with whatever has a tendency to touch the heart. But I have always thought that the ſpirit of devotion depends on ſentiment, rather than ratiocination; on the feelings of gratitude and wonder, joy, and ſorrow, triumph and contrition, hope and fear, rather than on theological diſquiſition however profound, or pious ſpeculation however exalted. Religion, it is certain, has been often mazed and loſt in

the labyrinth of ſchool-divinity. Although, in "contending for the faith once delivered to "the ſaints" againſt the attacks of unbelievers, ſound criticiſm and diſpaſſionate argument be undoubtedly the proper weapons, and although to thinking minds they be alſo the natural Inſtruments of information and conviction; yet is it not by them that the devotional principle is awakened and kept alive.

For unintelligible impreſſions, or wild enthuſiaſm, I am not an advocate. He that is, expoſes religion to diſgrace. Common ſenſe, calm reflection, univerſal righteouſneſs, a humanity unlimited by party, a moderation that can applaud virtue in an enemy; theſe, my dear charge, muſt never be given up on any pretence, or for any perſuaſion. A faith without morality, a devotion repugnant to reaſon, are not chriſtianity; but hypocriſy, or ſuperſtition. Beware of ſuch as under the maſk of zeal would ſeek to remove you from the only ground which, by God's bleſſing, can ſecure your ſteadfaſtneſs, improvement, and comfort; I mean a ſober evangelical piety.

In the days of the apoſtles there were thoſe that "lay in wait to deceive," that crept into

" widows houſes, and led captive ſilly wo-
" men." In our days their ſucceſſors are numerous. I ſay again, Of ſuch beware, " leſt
" by any means, as the ſerpent beguiled Eve
" through his ſubtilty, ſo your minds ſhould
" be corrupted from the ſimplicity that is in
" Chriſt." Remember always, that whatever teacher or teachers would avail themſelves of the warmth of your paſſions, or the vivacity of your imaginations, to ſeduce you into any ſyſtem unfriendly to a good temper and a good life, do either miſtake the true deſign of the goſpel, or have an ill deſign on you. But then on the other hand you may be equally aſſured, that whatever teacher or teachers would attempt by dry diſputation, or cold enquiry, to convert or edify ſouls, are ſtrangers alike to nature and to chriſtianity. What in truth is the latter, but an affectionate and powerful addreſs to the former, divinely adapted to take hold not of the underſtanding only, but of the conſcience, the will, and the paſſions; that is, of the moſt vital and operative principles of the heart?

Among the reſt I mentioned the paſſion of Fear. We are told by an apoſtle, that " per-

fect love caſteth out fear." But perfect love, in matters of religion, cannot, ſtrictly underſtood, be ſuppoſed compatible with human frailty. To that is the ſyſtem of Jeſus graciouſly proportioned. There the paſſion I ſpeak of is applied to, in a manner the moſt ſtriking that can be conceived. For what purpoſe? To damp reſolution, or diſhearten hope? No; but to reſtrain the impetuoſity of deſire, and to prevent the miſery of diſorder; not to frighten you from the mercy-ſeat, but to ſhew you the neceſſity of taking ſhelter there. You, my female friends, are naturally fearful. A conſcious weakneſs prompts you continually to ſeek protection. Feeling yourſelves, and knowing your ſex to be helpleſs, you flee to men for ſafety. But do you always find it in them?—Need I point you to a ſure refuge? I have done it already. Are you mortified at the timidity of your nature? Are you depreſſed by the feebleneſs of your frame? I know not that you have cauſe. I am certain you have not; if a ſenſe of your condition have induced you to put yourſelves under the guardianſhip of Omnipotence. Many of you, it is evident, have the art of turning your infirmities to your

own advantage, ſo far as concerns your influence with our ſex. But that power, which you thus extract from imbecility, is often, alas! by the unhappineſs of your paſſions, only rendered productive of new and greater weakneſſes; whereas, if you were wiſe, you might on your natural frailty build an invincible ſtrength, by ſecuring the protection of the Almighty.

Your Encouragements to do this, by the practice of ſuch a piety as I am now recommending, I will conſider in the next place; thoſe encouragements, I mean, which both Providence and Scripture preſent to your ſex with an appropriation as obſervable in itſelf, as it is mercifu to you.

Nothing can be more plain, than that Providence has placed you moſt commonly in circumſtances peculiarly advantageous for the exerciſes of devotion, and for the preſervation of that virtue, without which every profeſſion of godlineſs muſt be regarded as an impudent pretence. The ſituation of men lays them open to a variety of temptations, that lay out of your road. The buſtle of life, in which they are generally engaged, leaves them often

but little leiſure for holy offices. Their paſſions are daily ſubject to be heated by the ferment of buſineſs; and how hard is it for them to avoid being importuned to exceſs, while ſometimes a preſent intereſt, frequently a preſſing appetite, and yet more frequently the fear of ridicule, ſtimulates them to comply! How very hard for a young man to withſtand

"The world's dread laugh,
"Which ſcarce the firm philoſopher can ſcorn!"

In the caſe of our ſex, do we not often ſee ranked on the ſide of licentiouſneſs that reputation which ought to attend on ſobriety alone? Is not the laſt openly laughed at by thoſe, to whoſe opinion giddy young men will pay moſt reſpect, their own companions? Is not its contrary cried up as a mark of ſpirit? And if, in their unreſtrained converſation amongſt a diverſity of humours, they meet with affronts, are they not conſtantly told, that the maxims of honour require them to take revenge? Is not all this extremely unfavourable to the religious life, of which ſo great a part conſiſts in purity and prayer, in regularity and coolneſs, in ſelf-command and mild

affections? But from ſuch ſnares your ſex are happily exempted.

In many inſtances men are attacked by folly, before they ſurrender; whereas women muſt generally invite it by art, or rather indeed take it by violence, ere they can poſſeſs themſelves of its guilty pleaſures. So far the Almighty, in conſideration of their debility, and from a regard to their innocence has raiſed a kind of fence about them, to prevent thoſe wild excurſions into which the other ſex are frequently carried, with a freedom unchecked by fear, and favoured by cuſtom.

Corrupt as the world is, it certainly does expect from young women a ſtrict decorum; nor, as we have ſeen before, does it eaſily forgive them the leaſt deviation. Add that, while you remain without families of your own, few of you are neceſſarily ſo engaged, as not to have a large portion of time with daily opportunities for recollection, if you be inclined to improve them. I go farther and ſubjoin, that your improving them by a piety the moſt regular and avowed, if withal

unaffected and liberal, will be no ſort of objection to the men, but much the reverſe.

A bigotted woman every man of ſenſe will carefully ſhun, as a moſt diſagreeable, and even dangerous companion. But the ſecret reverence, which that majeſtic form Religion imprints on the hearts of all, is ſuch, that even they who will not ſubmit to its dictates themſelves, do yet wiſh it to be regarded by thoſe with whom they are connected in the neareſt relation. The verieſt infidel of them all, I am apt to believe, would be ſorry to find his ſiſter, daughter, or wife, under no reſtraint from religious principle. Thus it is, that even the greateſt libertines are forced to pay, at the ſame inſtant, a kind of implicit reſpect to the two main objects of their profligate ſatire, Piety and Women; while they conſider theſe as formed for each other, and tacitly acknowledge that the firſt is the only effectual means of enſuring the good behaviour of the laſt. Let them talk as long, and as contemptuouſly as they will, about that eaſy credulity, and thoſe ſuperſtitious terrors, which they pretend to be the foundation of your religion; ſome-

thing within will always give them the lie, ſo long as they perceive that your religion renders you more ſteadily virtuous, and more truly lovely.

But let us turn to Scripture, and ſee what peculiar incitement you have from thence to the profeſſion and practice of godlineſs. How encouraging to reflect, that the very firſt promiſe made to the human race diſtinguiſhed your ſex with a mark of honour, as ſignal as it was unexampled! Need I explain myſelf by ſaying, that the greateſt perſonage who ever viſited our world, he who came on the moſt important deſign, and who executed it in the moſt wonderful manner, none other and none leſs than "the Son of "God, who was manifeſted to deſtroy the "works of the devil," and on their ruins to raiſe an empire of righteouſneſs and happineſs, elevated as heaven, and laſting as eternity—that He, I ſay, was from the beginning predicted under the ſingular and intereſting character of "the ſeed of the wo-"man?" How exalting a circumſtance for your whole ſex, that the Saviour of men, the admiration of angels, and the prince of hea-

ven, was accordingly "in the fulneſs of time "made of a woman!" And Oh, my young friends, what dignity will it for ever reflect on maiden virtue, that "a virgin conceived "and bore a ſon the only begotten of the "Father, full of grace and truth?" Where is the religion, or the philoſophy, that has lifted your nature ſo high, or placed the beauty of female purity and excellence in a light ſo conſpicuous and noble.

Nor muſt we forget to take notice of the particular honours, with which individuals of your ſex have had their memories tranſmitted to poſterity by the ſacred records. Not to inſiſt on the females of the Old Teſtament, that "through faith have obtained a good "report;" it merits your obſervation how many we read of in the New, who for the duties of devotedneſs to their Saviour, the liberalities of reſpect to his perſon, and even the heroiſm of zeal in his cauſe, are marked out with a pre-eminence perfectly diſtinguiſhable.

When of his apoſtles the moſt ſanguine had denied, had even forſworn, and all the reſt had forſaken him and fled; we find thoſe

faithful and gentle creatures ſurrounding his croſs with lamentations, which they were neither aſhamed nor afraid to avow. Never ſure did female tears appear more graceful. Nor were they merely that tranſient flow of mechanical grief, ſo eaſily furniſhed by too many eyes, where the heart has little or no ſhare in the ſoft effuſion. The love which thoſe devout daughters of Jeruſalem bore to their maſter, nothing could extinguiſh. Who has not read that affecting ſtory of the viſit to his ſepulchre, paid by the pious Marys and their little company, together with the kind, generous, and, as it might have proved, very hazardous purpoſe which produced it? Their ſetting out alone, at ſo early an hour, while it was yet dark, to engage in ſo ſolemn a ſcene, afforded a ſtriking proof of the courage and conſtancy with which their piety had inſpired them, amidſt all that ſpirits like theirs muſt have ſuffered from ſo many circumſtances of ſorrow. In their countenances, words, and geſtures on that occaſion, I think I read the painful, yet amiable emotions, that wrought in their tender throbbing hearts. I am particularly charmed with the eager

anxiety, and beautiful diſtreſs of Mary Magdalene, whoſe gratitude for the tranſcendant mercies ſhe had received, did then flame out with ſuch uncommon fervour. While I contemplate the whole tranſaction, with the conduct that preceded it, I cannot but admire that juſtice which, in preference to all others, honoured thoſe excellent women with being the firſt witneſſes and publiſhers of Chriſt's reſurrection, or, as an ancient writer has expreſſed it, Apoſtles to the Apoſtles themſelves. A very natural, as it is in effect a moſt memorable attachment, and unconquerable fidelity! Surely it was not in vain, that the annals of inſpiration have regiſtered thoſe pleaſing facts with ſuch particularity. There they ſtand, and will for ever ſtand, illuſtrious monuments of female worth, in a conjuncture moſt peculiarly trying, and of the extraordinary approbation it met with from him, in whoſe ſight devotion and perſeverance, affection and faith, will always outſhine the more ſhowy qualities that fill the world with hiſtory and wonder.

I ſhould have mentioned before this, the friendſhip of Jeſus to the ſiſters of Lazarus,

his applauſe of the woman of Canaan, and his pathetic addreſs to the women who followed him weeping, while he carried his croſs. It is likewiſe worthy of remark that of all the diſciples, he who ſeems, in a certain divine ſweetneſs of diſpoſition, to have reſembled him moſt, directed one of thoſe epiſtles which make a part of our ſcriptures to a Lady, a perſon of diſtinction much reſpected by him and all the believers of that time for her eminent piety, and that of her children.

And now, if with encouragements like theſe to the love of God and of your Saviour, any of you, my fair auditory, ſhould live in forgetfulneſs of both; what ſhall we ſay of ſuch, but that they are deſtitute of true ambition, and totally inſenſible to the moſt diſtinguiſhing favours of heaven?

But perhaps we ſhall be told, that the perpetual flatteries which many of you meet with from men on account of its inferior gifts, ſuch as youth, beauty, fancy, ſprightlineſs, prevent or deſtroy thoſe better ſentiments which you might be otherwiſe diſpoſed to cultivate. I doubt it not. But do

ye plead this as an excuſe? Your ſituation, we have granted all along, ſubjects you to temptations in particular inſtances. But we have now ſeen, that it frees you from other very dangerous ſnares, and includes the moſt powerful attractives to your duty. What are you to infer from the whole, but that you ought to avail yourſelves of theſe advantages, for fortifying and guarding you wherever you lie expoſed?

I have juſt named what appears to me your ſex's weakeſt ſide. To arm you on that I have had opportunities of offering a variety of precautions. I now add, and it ſhall be my laſt conſideration on this occaſion, that Revelation concurs with reaſon to furniſh the ſtrongeſt weapons of defence againſt that adulation, which is ſo great an enemy to your ſouls.

That your ſouls are immortal is probable from reaſon, and certain from revelation. But the arguments from either I hold it unneceſſary to propoſe here. To attempt the conviction of female infidels falls not within my preſent deſign. Indeed I fear it were a hopeleſs undertaking. The prepoſterous va-

nity, together with the open or ſecret profligacy, by which they have been warped into ſcepticiſm, would in all likelihood baffle any endeavours of mine. If they be not however ſo far gone in that unhappy ſyſtem, as to be reſolved againſt all ſober enquiry, I would earneſtly recommend to their peruſal a few of the many excellent writings, which this age and country have produced in favour of religion both natural and revealed. At the ſame time I would juſt remind them, that the daring and diſputatious ſpirit of unbelief is utterly repugnant to female ſoftneſs, and to that ſweet docility which, in their ſex, is ſo peculiarly pleaſing to ours; not to mention, that from an infidel partner a man can have no proſpect of conſolation in thoſe hours of diſtreſs, when the hopes of futurity can alone adminiſter relief.—To you, my chriſtian hearers, I was going to obſerve, that the ſtedfaſt and ſerious belief of immortality, as pointed out in your frame, and brought to light by the goſpel, will excite ſuch a mighty concern to ſecure its grand intereſts, ſuch a high ſenſe of your internal dignity, ſuch a predominant ambition of being acceptable

in his ſight, who can make you happy or wretched for ever, as muſt neceſſarily leſſen in your eſteem every external and periſhing advantage.

If you be really poſſeſſed by thoſe principles, he that from ſpiritual and everlaſting objects would turn your chief regard to ſkin-deep and ſhort-lived allurements, will ſurely, in a moment of recollection at leaſt, be looked upon by you as a tempter to be ſhunned. That pride of life, which in the eye of folly ſwells into ſuch importance, will ſhrink and fade away into its native idleneſs in her view, whoſe thoughts are often entertained with the magnificence and ſplendor of eternal things. To that young woman who, like her of Bethany, "has choſen the good part," who meekly penſive ſits at the feet of Jeſus, and with delighted reverence hears his words; the inſinuation of the vicious, the impertinence of the vain, in ſhort, whatever would rob her of her portion, or obſtruct her enjoying it, will not, I think, be over-pleaſing. To her the care of her ſalvation is the one thing needful. Compared with that, even the beſt things of this world appear, what in

truth they are, but trifles; in which, becauſe the condition of mortality makes it unavoidable, ſhe ſhares with chearfulneſs, but in which ſhe ſhares with moderation too, becauſe ſhe has buſineſs to mind of infinite moment.

"What ſhall it profit a man, if he ſhall "gain the whole world, and loſe his own "ſoul?" The queſtion was aſked by him, who knew right well the value of both. Had he aſked, 'What ſhall it profit a Woman, if 'ſhe ſhall gain the whole world, and loſe 'her own ſoul? would the ſtate of the queſtion have been altered? You will not ſay it. Weighed againſt a ſoul, the empire of the earth were duſt in the balance. What then ſhall we call thoſe things, for which ſinners are daily forfeiting their ſalvation? Tell me, ye flattered fair ones, what is the worth of praiſe or admiration from knaves, or from fools, for which ſo many of you are ready to forfeit your's? Ye daughters of Vanity, tell me what will dreſs, or ſhow, or gaiety of any kind, where God and goodneſs are neglected, "profit in the day of wrath?" In that day of diſcovery and deciſion, what will appear-

ances avail?—Give me back theſe laſt ſentences: I had forgotten: Dreſs, ſhow, gaiety, appearances, will be then no more.—But hold; before we look ſo far, let us ſee what they can perform now.

They can attract attention; they can allure deſire; they can excite encomium, deceive the unwary, and captivate the weak, for a little. But inform us, ye boaſted beauties, who are told every day of your power, what permanent eſſential good can it procure? Bring it to the proof. Bid the ſun that meaſures your days, ſtand ſtill; command the current of time that hurries you along, to ſtop; ſay to wrinkled age, to fell diſeaſe, Approach me not, ye frightful forms. Alas! they are deaf as the adder, and ſtubborn as the rock. Try then your influence in ſome ſmaller thing. Make the experiment on the head-ach: enjoin it to be gone. It goes not. But perhaps the heart-ach may hear, and obey: your inward feelings at leaſt ſhould be under your controul. But you have given them the rein; nor will they be checked on a ſudden. While you have thought only of conquering other hearts, you have ſuffered

headſtrong paſſions to conquer your own. Summon then your worſhippers, and order them to interpoſe; ſee if by all their incenſe, and all their zeal, they can keep you young in ſpite of years, or make you glad in ſpite of affliction. They are ſilent. Aſk them, if they will undertake to die for you? They retire. Call after them—'Will you anſwer 'for us at the judgment day?'—Again that awful period ruſhes on the mind. Ah, my friends, what will ye do then without religion? The thought is big with horror. Then, then it ſhall be ſeen, with an evidence bright and terrible as the funeral fire of Nature, that "beauty is deceitful, and fa- "vour is vain."—But what means that univerſal ſhout of human and angelic voices? What words are thoſe, which I hear reſounding through the aſſembly of the univerſe? "A woman that feareth the Lord, "She ſhall be praiſed!"

SERMON XI.

On Female Piety.

1 Tim. ii. 10.

—Which becometh women profeſſing Godlineſs.

Prov. xxxi. 30.

Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, She ſhall be praiſed.

IF from what has been advanced concerning Female Piety, you be ſatisfied of its importance and neceſſity; you will naturally attend, while I proceed, without any preface, to ſhow you, in what manner it may be cultivated with moſt ſucceſs.

Is is difficult to ſay whether the inſtrumental duties of religion, as they are uſually termed, have been more miſrepreſented by

ſuperſtition and hypocriſy on one hand, or by vicious refinement and vain philoſophy on the other. By the former they have been extolled, as if they were the whole of religion; while the latter have decried them as vulgar, unavailing, and inſignificant. The real truth is, that they are not only a part of religion, but an eſſential and important part of it; eſſential, as expreſſing its ſeveral affections, and important, as nouriſhing and maintaining them; eſſential, as a direct compliance with the divine authority, and important, as rendering ſuch compliance more ready and habitual.

Habits, we all know, are formed by many reiterated acts; and if theſe be diſcontinued, thoſe will in time be loſt. As good impreſſions are at firſt produced by proper attention, ſo if this be ſuſpended, they will ſoon fade from the mind; and the ſooner, no doubt, that many of them at leaſt were produced there in oppoſition to appetite, faſhion, and the maxims of the world. Even friendſhip itſelf, which has originally ſo powerful a hold of the human heart, is not to be preſerved alive, without that interchange of

words and actions, if the parties be near; or that commerce of thoughts and wiſhes, if they be not, to which it naturally inclines. What could you expect from him, who ſhould profeſs to entertain an affection for you, and yet teſtify no deſire of your company, take no delight in your converſation, or if abſent never enquire after you? Religion is a Divine Friendſhip, to be begun and continued in the ſame manner with that which is Human; making allowance ſtill for the infinite diſparity between the Creator and the creature, between the Sovereign Spirit all pure and perfect, and a dependant mind embodied and frail.

In cultivating a friendſhip which you wiſhed to be thorough and laſting, you would often ſtep aſide from the crowd to enjoy the freedom of undiſturbed converſe; you would lay open your heart with confidence to the object beloved, liſten to each communication with pleaſure, enter more and more into the ſame conceptions, exchange every poſſible mark of eſteem, and, in the end, eſtabliſh an union of intereſts and of ſouls alike cloſe and tender. Now here we have ſome reſemblance

of private devotion. It is not my deſign to purſue this reſemblance through its ſeveral parts; neither do I pretend to ſay, that it holds minutely in every one of them: but the ground is clear to her who believes in an omnipreſent Deity, and knows that between minds there may be an intercourſe independent of the ſenſes. The application can only be learnt by practice, and much practice too.

It will not be learnt by thoſe who have no reliſh for retirement. The Almighty's voice muſt be often attended to in the ſilence of the paſſions, and the ſecrecy of the ſoul. Thoſe are yet ſtrangers to their Maker, who cannot endure to think of him, or do not love to turn to him, when alone. Is the reverſe of this, my dear hearer, your caſe? Are your meditations of God ſweet? Does your heart go out after him, as its beſt and greateſt object? Is it your joy to pour it forth into his paternal boſom? Do you frequently find the exerciſe ſo delightful, as to quit it with unwillingneſs? Do you generally perceive your ſentiments raiſed and refined by it, your ideas of your duty quickened and enlarged, your deteſtation of the contrary confirmed and height-

ened, your reſolutions invigorated of courſe, your gratitude, humility, meekneſs, reſignation, and good affections of every kind improved? Then are you a true worſhipper. Theſe are ſome of the genuine workings of piety.

I enquire not, whether they be the reſult of longer or ſhorter prayers, of ſtudied forms or extempore addreſs, of more or fewer ſtated ſeaſons for ſuch offices. In theſe particulars different minds require a diverſity, or a different education occaſions it. But ſhe, I ſuppoſe, will be the greateſt proficient in the Spirit of Prayer, who is at the greateſt pains to be ſo; I do not mean in the way of ſcience or art, but in that of earneſtneſs and perſeverance.

Beſide the regular, invariable, and ſolemn performance of your morning and evening devotions, it would be well if now and then, eſpecially on the day of ſacred reſt, you took repeated opportunities of entering into your cloſet, ſhutting your door, and praying to your Father who ſees in ſecret; according as you found yourſelf in a happier diſpoſition for ſuch employment, or were prompted to it by ſome peculiar occurrence in your ſituation, or

exigence in your ſoul. And if at certain times of the year, printed out by religious cuſtom, or fixed upon by perſonal choice, you were to conſecrate a whole day to holy retreat and devotional exerciſes, joined with prudent faſting; you would, I am perſuaded, find it as highly beneficial in your own practice, as it comes ſtrongly recommended by the experience of the ſaints.

If you might be adviſed by me, you ſhould in prayer neither truſt wholly to your ſingle fund of thought and expreſſion, ſuppoſing it even rich and various, nor confine yourſelf entirely to forms, by whatever man or ſet of men compoſed; but uſe ſometimes one, ſometimes the other, and ſometimes a mixture of both, juſt as the attraction of your mind ſeems to lead at the moment, or as any of theſe methods may on trial be attended with moſt ſatisfaction and advantage. In effect, I am convinced that of thoſe who, in this kind of commerce, limit themſelves to their own unaſſiſted ſtock, the greater part will often, particularly in circumſtances of bad health or ſpiritual dryneſs, be reduced to ſuch ſtraits as muſt produce a poverty of devotion which

they could not ſuffer, did they proceed on a larger foundation. On the other hand, I cannot conceive, that, even amongſt thoſe who are moſt devoted to forms, any ſincere worſhipper ſhould not by the ſwelling of ſentiment, and the current of devotion, be frequently carried away into a freer and fuller effuſion of the heart.

As to the length of thoſe duties, I would only ſay, that you muſt be governed by your condition both outward and inward; that you are to avoid every thing careleſs, or formal, whether with or without preconceived words; that little intermiſſions are often extremely uſeful to relieve the mind, and fit it for new exertion of its powers; but that on the other ſide, by praying in continuity, the ſoul is often warmed into life and energy, till that exerciſe which was begun with languor is concluded with affection.

When I ſpeak of affection, let me warn you not to miſtake the effervescence of fancy for the ſpirit of devotion. They are two things widely different, "By their fruits ye ſhall know them." The fluency, tears, and rapture, produced by the firſt, are mechanical,

ſuperficial, and ineffective; engendering only the confidence of Enthuſiaſm, or waſting them in the ſcrupuloſity of Superſtition. The laſt, though frequently accompanied with fluency, tears, and rapture, at leaſt in minds of much ſenſibility, is yet often not ſo; but then it leaves the heart better, however this may not be diſcerned immediately. She who ſometimes perhaps, like the ſelf-abaſed publican, is able only to ſigh out "God be merciful to me a ſinner," may in that all-ſeeing eye be as acceptable as the moſt eloquent petitioner that ever addreſſed the throne of heaven. We read of "the Spirit's helping our "infirmities" in this very exerciſe, "and "making interceſſions for us with groanings "that cannot be uttered."

Mental prayer, and ſilent ejaculation, I will not now conſider. They are the attainments of perſons far advanced in devotion. By purſuing the track I point out, you may hope to reach them in one degree or another; and ſome experience in them will lead you to more. Thoſe who can abſtract and concentrate their minds, ſo as readily to place themſelves in the preſence of God, wherever they

are, and to converſe with him even in a crowd, whether by continued contemplation, or by ſudden dartings of pious affection towards him on the point of a vigorous thought, certainly poſſeſs a very noble ſecret, fruitful alike of edification and enjoyment; ſuch too as renders them much leſs dependant on the accidents of their ſituation, ſince let their buſineſs or other engagements be what they will, they may be ſtill with God, calm, ſelf-poſſeſſed, and happily diſpoſed to "pray always:" a ſtate of ſpiritual life, which there is reaſon to fear is known by few.

There is a kind of middle practice, which is probably leſs uncommon, as it is certainly more eaſy; that of praying with a repreſſed voice, or one not in the leaſt audible to a ſecond perſon, while yet the words are diſtinctly and deliberately ſpoken by the worſhipper, who by ſuch means preſerves his ideas from diſſipation, and impreſſes them more deeply on his own heart. I ſaid deliberately; becauſe, in this as well as in every other method of prayer, hurry and precipitation are utterly incompatible with the ſpirit of devotion.

Of even the ſtrongeſt and moſt retired minds it may, I believe, be affirmed, that they never think at all, on whatever occaſion, without the ſecret or internal uſe of language, although they ſeldom attend to it. Be that as it may, I am ſatisfied that vocal prayer, whether more or leſs articulate, will be found in general, by far the moſt proportioned to the human and particularly to the female faculties. Of the manner laſt mentioned we have a remarkable example in the mother of Samuel. It is a beautiful paſſage, ſtrongly expreſſive of the workings of a devout but ſorrowful ſpirit, and at the ſame time of the power of devotion to turn ſorrow and ſighing into joy and praiſe.

One thing we may boldly pronounce, as a maxim which will never fail; that ſhe has worſhipped to purpoſe, in whatever mode ſhe has worſhipped, who comes away improved or eſtabliſhed in worthy diſpoſitions, whether theſe be attended with much emotion or with none, with much delight or with little, at the time. This remark I judged peculiarly neceſſary here, conſidering how eaſily you, my young friends, may be miſled on

this ſubject by that ardour of paſſion, and that vivacity of fancy, which are ſo natural to you; and which, wherever devotion is concerned, are ſo prone to aſſume its name, when at the very beſt they can only aid its flights.

On the ſame principle, I would caution you not to loſe yourſelves in generalities; which, however they may chance to engage the underſtanding, or entertain the imagination, ſeldom touch the conſcience, or intereſt the heart. In converſing with a virtuous and intimate friend, you would chooſe certainly to dwell on thoſe matters that affected you moſt nearly, or to throw out thoſe reflexions that moſt daily occurred. In this higher correſpondence, you ſhould do the ſame; only with more ſolemnity, and greater abſtraction from ſecular objects.

Nothing can be more erroneous than the common opinion, that the ſeveral parts of prayer, as they are uſually termed, ought to enter into every longer act of devotion. What is this, but to reduce into a mere trial of ſkill, or to reſtrain within the trammels of a ſyſtem, and thereby degrade to a laborious and jejune piece of formality, that which ought to be

free and unaffected, natural and noble?—'I 'am going into the company of a boſom-'friend. Let me ſettle before-hand the 'whole plan of our converſation; that I 'may be ſure to introduce ſuch and ſuch to-'pics, in order to diſcuſs them ſeverally one 'after another, at full length, and with due 'connection.'—He who ſhould talk in this manner would diſcover, methinks, very little acquaintance with the ſpirit of friendſhip. In that, my ſiſters, and in true devotion, there is nothing, believe me, artificial, nicely managed, or elaborately ſtudied. Eſteem, ſentiment, confidence, a ſympathy of ſoul, and the overflowings of the heart, are all in all. I think not at preſent of the public offices of religion, where, in thoſe who lead them, more regularity and accuracy are no doubt required.

On the whole, when you addreſs the ſeat of mercy, you ought to ſpeak what you feel moſt ſtrongly at that particular ſeaſon; to follow, without ſcruple the inward attraction before-mentioned; to inſiſt on thoſe things of a ſpiritual nature, that are then attended with the greateſt reliſh; to continue your attention to

them calmly, but fixedly, while that reliſh remains; then to paſs on, if time and other circumſtances permit, to ſomething elſe, ſtill without any agitation or violent effort; nor deeming it neceſſary to follow out this new track, ſhould another preſent itſelf that ſeems more promiſing, or that lies more parallel to the courſe of your thoughts on the occaſion; chiefly concerned to keep alive a ſenſe of that great preſence in which you are, of thoſe wants and weakneſſes under which you labour, of what you owe to others as well as to yourſelves, and of that divinely efficacious interceſſion, through which alone you wiſh and hope to be heard and accepted.

A compoſed, affectionate, and ſteady attention to theſe and ſuch like rules (for I cannot now enter into the full detail) will, if I be not greatly miſtaken, prove one effectual mean of cultivating the life and power of religion within you. I need not add, what you have been told times without number, and what your own hearts cannot on the leaſt reflexion fail to repeat; that no prayers can be effectual for this or any one good purpoſe, which are not accompanied with a correſpon-

dent watchfulneſs and faithful diſcharge of every other duty.

But it may be neceſſary to ſubjoin, that the practice of devotion, now recommended, cannot take place without much preparation from time to time; of which one well-known part is the Reading of the Scriptures. On this a very few obſervations ſhall ſuffice.

For acquiring what is generally ſtiled Religious Knowledge, reading the ſcriptures throughout, and often large portions at a time, may be perfectly proper. For improving in that which thoſe ſcriptures ſpeak of chiefly under this denomination, I mean a practical and vital ſenſe of things divine and everlaſting, a different method, as I conceive, ſhould be followed.

Short and ſelect paſſages from both Teſtaments, but eſpecially the New, and more particularly from the hiſtory and ſermons of our Saviour, ſhould be peruſed and pondered at leiſure, firſt without any commentary at all, and ſo indeed for the moſt part, except where there is a manifeſt difficulty; in doing which, you ſhould with awful reverence and child-like ſimplicity lay your minds open to the na-

tive impreſſions of the truth, and to the ſecret teachings of its Author. When, in this way, you meet with one or more verſes, that ſtrike you with peculiar conviction or delight; cloſe the book, revolve them again and again, look up to heaven, and implore the Father of Spirits to write their meaning on your hearts, as "with the point of a diamond." Read nothing more at that time, nothing at leaſt that has not a near relation to the ideas and affections they excite. Give theſe an eaſy unſtudied vent in prayer. The pleaſure and the benefit will be unſpeakable. Only ſuffer not the tincture thereby left upon you, to be loſt in the ſucceeding ſcenes. Next morning review the ſame paſſage; endeavour to recal the ſame ſentiments, and with your pencil mark it for your future benefit.

A young lady formerly of my acquaintance, who is now reading the character and will of her Creator in the light of the beatific viſion, uſed daily to follow this practice. Her bible was infinitely prized by her; whatever was moſt excellent in it, ſhe had thought and weighed all over. Its ſacred contents were engraven on her ſoul; or rather her ſoul was

delivered into the mould of it. She lived in innocence, and died in triumph.

Is it neceſſary, my beloved diſciples, that I ſhould urge you to the ſtudy of a book which, while it tends to make you wiſe to ſalvation, is calculated alſo to convey the moſt affecting views, and awaken the ſublimeſt ſenſibilities, on a thouſand topics? A book it certainly is, full of entertainment as well as inſtruction, compoſed by a great diverſity of authors, and all of them divinely taught. I think I ſee them, one after another, preſenting for your improvement their reſpective writings, with an aſpect of dignity and ſweetneſs combined, the dignity of truth, and the ſweetneſs of benevolence; both derived from him, who inſpired them to be the teachers of mankind, and who, in order to gain them the more belief and veneration, inveſted many of them with a command over Nature, and a knowledge of Futurity, which none but the God of Nature, and the Spirit of Omniſcience could impart. I think I hear them ſeverally addreſſing you, in the name of God, with an authority that can only be equalled by their mildneſs, on ſubjects the grandeſt and

moſt important, in a happy variety of ſtyles, amidſt an uniformity of ſentiments, and an agreement in facts, which, the multiplicity of them conſidered, muſt ever appear truly admirable! What ſhall I ſay more?—I will not deſire you to read this book called the Bible, if you can ſhow me another containing ſo much to inform, impreſs, and delight reflecting minds, laid together in a manner ſo extenſively adapted to their various turns of underſtanding, taſte, and temper; which people of different and diſtant countries, through a long ſucceſſion of ages, have held in ſo much reverence, and read with ſo much advantage; where it is ſo difficult to determine, which are moſt diſtinguiſhed, eaſe and ſimplicity, or ſublimity and force, but where all are ſo beautifully united; where there is ſo little to diſcourage the weakeſt ſpirit if docile, and ſo much to gratify the ſtrongeſt if candid; where the fancy and the heart, the intellect and the conſcience, are applied to by turns with ſuch familiarity, and yet ſuch majeſty; in fine, where the frailties, diſorders, and diſtreſſes of human nature, are all ſo feelingly laid open, and the remedies which heaven has

provided, ſo tenderly applied. But to proceed:

Of books in Divinity I do not wiſh you to ready very many. Thoſe in the way of Religious Controverſy, as it is called, but which are frequently written in a moſt irreligious ſpirit, that is, without any candour or fairneſs, I do not wiſh you to read at all. Mere argumentative theology I have never known to improve the temper, or regulate the conduct; but often to hurt both. Happily for you indeed, the female taſte very ſeldom lies in that way; never, I think, where there is female ſweetneſs. By a good providence you have been taught "the truth as it is in Jeſus." Be it your ambition to practiſe, not to diſpute about it. Enjoy your faith in modeſt ſilence, and think well of thoſe who differ from you in opinions, if they agree in morals: but learn to deſpiſe the futility, while you diſcourage the impudence, of ſuch as would pretend to talk you out of your religion. Be aſſured they are often empty, and always worthleſs. If they attempt it in the ſtyle of banter, they offer you an affront. If they affect to ſeem in earneſt, to be ſorry

for your prejudices, and ſolicitous to remove them by converſation, and by books which they are ready to lend you; a hundred to one, but they are actuated by the worſt deſigns. Flee them, my fair pupils, flee them with horror, as tempters and ravagers at the ſame inſtant.

By making conſcience of ſincerely obeying the precepts of the goſpel, while you meekly embrace its doctrines, as they appear to you ſet forth in the ſcriptures, you will have the witneſs of its divinity within yourſelves. From thence you will be diſpoſed to chooſe and to adhere to thoſe writers, of whatever communion, that are calculated to make you moſt in love with your Saviour and your duty. The formal and frigid you will naturally diſlike; the uncharitable and illiberal you will nobly deteſt; the trifling and ſuperficial you will very eaſily contemn. Thoſe books, how well ſoever recommended, that even in your graveſt hours do not attract and perſuade you (I now ſuppoſe you pious) ye will readily perceive are not the books for you. Such as do both in a greater or leſs degree, it is apparent, are adapted to your caſt of mind. Thoſe in

ſhort will be your favourite authors, whether in verſe or proſe, whom you find moſt frequently new and intereſting; who preſent the moſt pathetic pictures of this world and the next; who tell you moſt convincingly what you are, and what you ought to be; who, in a word, ſeem to addreſs themſelves with the greateſt power to the ſpirit of ingenuity, humility, contrition, ſelf-denial, ſolid virtue, and affectionate devotion.

I take it for granted you attend on the Public Inſtitutions of religion. The ſuperior regularity of your ſex in this reſpect the men, to ſay the truth, ſhow very little inclination to diſpute. May the women take care to convince them, that it is ſomething more than mere regularity! In the mean time I am ſure, that they who perform their firſt duties, are much more likely to perform their ſecond alſo, than they who do not.

Let your attendance be more than what the world calls decent: let it be punctual. She that becomes deficient in punctuality, will ſoon become indifferent about the whole. Having omitted her duty unneceſſarily once, a ſecond, and a third time, ſhe will omit

it the fourth with leſs compunction; and ere long will be ready to neglect it without any. It is wonderful, how ſoon a ſenſe of futurity dies from the ſoul. Have you ever known it to live, after the Sabbath was grown into contempt? What multitudes have been forced to date their ruin from that period?

But not to ſpeak of the openly profane, do thoſe ſanctify the ſabbath to whom it is not a delight, who viſit the houſe of God without preparation, and worſhip there without devotion? What ſhall we ſay of many a young woman who paſſes for good and pious, although ſhe cannot for an hour together behave with ſedateneſs or compoſure, in the immediate preſence of the Moſt High? That mind muſt be volatile indeed, which the ſolemnities of a chriſtian aſſembly cannot fix for a little. Do we wiſh you then to diſfigure your faces like the Phariſees, to hang your heads like a bulruſh, or to practiſe religious grimace of any kind? No. Is even the graveſt look, or moſt recollected manner, a certain ſign of piety? It is not: and yet will you ſay, that ſuch a look and manner are of no importance on ſuch an

occaſion; that they are not naturally ſuited to it; or that the ſpirit of piety may very probably dwell in her heart whoſe countenance and carriage even on that occaſion do not bear the marks of it, who even then cannot reſtrain the rolling eye, forget the conſcious air, or leave the fluttering demeanour:

Believe me, ladies, a different behaviour would appear much more becoming. Men of ſenſe and ſobriety would entertain a much better opinion of your principles; nor would it be any diſadvantage to your perſons. Never perhaps does a fine woman ſtrike more deeply, than when compoſed into pious recollection, and poſſeſſed with the nobleſt conſiderations, ſhe aſſumes, without knowing it, ſuperior dignity and new graces; ſo that the beauties of holineſs ſeem to radiate about her, and the by-ſtanders are almoſt induced to fancy her already worſhipping among her kindred angels.

But to return to the point immediately before us; I ſay, that the habit of ſerioufneſs and devotion in church, will produce very deſirable effects on your temper and conduct out of it. By beginning the week well, you

will retain through the remainder a certain impreſſion of goodneſs, that will follow you every where; at the ſame time that, by ſuch avowed teſtimonies of reſpect for your Maker and Saviour, you will enſure the continuance of the divine benediction and aſſiſtance.

The great advantages ariſing from a diligent attention to the Preaching of the word, and alſo from an early, frequent, and devout participation of the Lord's ſupper, I will not now enter on. They are abundantly obvious, and have been frequently enforced. But I cannot quit the ſubject of the ſabbath without obſerving, that to thoſe, who join in the public ſervices of that day, its utility is often totally defeated by their reſigning the evening to company and recreation; the general tendency of theſe being to efface any ſerious impreſſions made in the preceding part of it. For ſuch a practice you, my fair charge, who have commonly ſo much leiſure upon your hands, cannot plead the leaſt excuſe.

Very hard it is, if thoſe who give ſo many other evenings to amuſement, cannot find in their heart to give this or a part of it to God. But, alas! it is that very paſſion

for amuſement, which prevents or dulls the taſte for devotion. To her indeed, who will not be perſuaded to reſcue ſo ſmall a portion of her time from the gaieties of the world for the purpoſes of her ſalvation, we cannot hope to ſay any thing that will be of uſe. She who cannot enjoy the company of her Creator for an hour or two, remote from all other company, was never initiated into the myſteries of divine friendſhip; ſhe is yet in her ſins, "alienated from the life of God, "dead while ſhe lives," in a ſpiritual ſenſe dead, alive only to animal nature and the tumultuous dreams of a diſtempered mind; in ſhort, a poor giddy worthleſs creature, incapable of whatever is wiſe or happy.

"Oh! loſt to virtue, loſt to ſober thought,
"Loſt to the noble ſallies of the ſoul,
"Who think it ſolitude to be alone.
"Communion ſweet! communion large and high!
"Our reaſon, guardian angel, and our God!
"Then neareſt theſe, when others moſt remote;
"And all ere long ſhall be remote but theſe.
"How dreadful then to meet them all alone,
"A ſtranger unacknowledg'd, unapprov'd!"

I tremble at the thought. Nor will it

avail you, in this caſe, to plead even the utmoſt exactneſs and conſtancy in your attendance on the ſanctuary. That alone will prove nothing. Entertainment may ſtill be the idol which you worſhip, and worſhip even in the temple of Jehovah. If you ſay it is not, let us bring you to the teſt. When you return home from the houſe of God, can you retire with pleaſure to your cloſets, impoſe ſilence on your fancies, command your paſſions to be ſtill, exclude every thought of dreſs, and diverſion, company and admiration; review what you have been doing, recall what you have heard, make application if it admit of any (there are few diſcourſes that admit not of ſome;) and then caſting yourſelves down at the footſtool of the throne of God, pour out your hearts before him, confeſs with ſimplicity and ſorrow your ſins and corruptions, implore the grace of repentance and remiſſion for what is paſt, of diſcernment to know your duty for the future, and of fortitude to do it, forming at the ſame time unfeigned reſolutions to that purpoſe; joining to the whole the adoration of the divine attributes, as they ſucceſſively

or jointly riſe to your view; and, finally, throwing yourſelves on the divine mercy through Chriſt Jeſus?—Can you do this? Is it your favourite and habitual employment, in the evening of that day which God has made for himſelf! To her who can honeſtly anſwer in the affirmative, I will acknowledge freely that, next to the daily tenor of a conduct uniformly chriſtian, ſhe gives one of the beſt proofs of ſincerity in her religious profeſſion; nor is there any thing excellent in that, which I ſhould not expect from a practice ſo wiſe and pious. But what is to be expected of thoſe who know nothing of this? Or what can be ſaid of their intentions in going to church, who the moment they leave it, leave every reflection which it ought to have imprinted, and reſolve to think of religion that day no more than if they had not heard or mentioned a ſyllable relating to it? St. James will inform you whom they are like. They are "like unto a man beholding "his natural face in a glaſs: for he behold-"eth himſelf and goeth his way, and ſtraight-"way forgetteth what manner of man he "was."——Do men then ſo readily loſe the

image of themſelves? No; but the apoſtle muſt be underſtood to ſpeak of ſome thoughtleſs creature, who, on looking accidentally into a glaſs, and obſerving certain ſpots or ſtains in his face, which he ought inſtantly to wipe off, turns away in haſte without availing himſelf of the diſcovery, and, in the purſuit of other objects, entirely neglects a circumſtance that demanded his immediate attention. I leave you to apply the remark, and only add in general, that the cloſet muſt enforce what the pulpit has ſuggeſted; that as, like Lydia, you ſhould attend diligently to the things which are ſpoken in the name of God, ſo, like Mary, you ſhould keep and ponder them in your hearts; and that as Jeſus himſelf, diſmiſſing the multitudes together with his diſciples, "went up into a "mountain apart to pray," ſo you, diſengaging yourſelves from the interruption of a crowd, and the company even of your moſt intimate connexions, ſhould ſtep aſide, more particularly at the ſeaſon in queſtion, to converſe with his Father and your Father, with his God and your God.

Think not from any thing I have ſaid,

that I want to ſubject you to the rules of Jewiſh rigour, under the mild diſpenſation of the Goſpel. What I propoſe will render the Chriſtian ſabbath no leſs pleaſant than improving. Nor do I mean to preclude on that day the chearful reciprocations of holy friendſhip; which they that have a taſte for them will eaſily diſtinguiſh from the unſeaſonable paſtimes and promiſcuous viſitings, in which many fine ladies of the preſent age paſs their Sunday evenings.

Thus I am brought to ſay ſomething of Religious Converſation. An attempt to diſcuſs ſo important a topic would carry me too far. To manage religious converſation with propriety and advantage, is for the moſt part an affair of great delicacy. In the more retired intercourſe of congenial minds, well taught and well furniſhed, it may not be difficult. But ſuch, I fear, are not often found; and even where ſuch have the happineſs to meet, grave diſcourſe will require to be frequently varied, relieved, and ſuſpended, in order to keep up its reliſh.

Much ſentiment is apt to overwhelm. The ſoul quickly ſeeks relaxation. The bow can-

not be long bent without having its elaſticity impaired. In general company, ſubjects of devotion and morality would, as the world goes, be utterly improper. Good Lord! to what is this generation ſunk, that even amongſt characters otherwiſe decent a man can ſeldom or ever introduce a ſolemn reflexion, without incurring the imputation of cant or impertinence? When ſhall it be the mode to converſe like immortal beings? Where is the faſhionable circle now, in which a ſerious obſervation can be prudently hazarded, if not ſtolen upon them with art and inſinuation? Neither is this a part for you to take upon yourſelves.

Female modeſty is often ſilent; female decorum is never bold. Both forbid a young woman to lead the converſation; and true religion dreads every thing that might look oſtentatious. The moſt prudent courſe you can purſue is to aſſociate, as much as poſſible, with thoſe that from real principle love the ſhade. With them you may ſafely unboſom yourſelves on the beſt ſubjects, without the danger of ridicule, or the ſuſpicion of affectation. When the children of Wiſdom af-

ſemble, out of the ſight and din of Folly; what improvement and felicity crown the ſcene! How delightfully do they then mingle ſouls! Nor does their parent diſdain to ſport with her offspring. I mean, that genuine piety knows how to blend recreation and ſmiles with ſentiment and gravity.

Having mentioned Sentiment ſo often, I will now once for all offer you a caution, on which I lay a particular ſtreſs. It is this; not to miſtake the capacity of thinking juſtly, or of talking well, for the ſame thing with a diſpoſition to act wiſely. The truth is, that people are not wiſe in conſequence either of profound knowledge, or vaſt learning, or beautiful notions, or the moſt cultivated taſte, or the greateſt ability in diſplaying theſe; but by virtue of a few plain notions ſettled into principles of conduct; even as people are not healthy by feaſting on rich dainties, or indulging a too nice palate, but by living on ſimpler fare, where temperance does not wiſh for much variety, and where hunger does not want it.

Nevertheleſs, there is not perhaps any thing that flatters the human mind more

than depth or fluency of remark, than compaſs or facility of converſation. In effect, they are talents not often poſſeſſed, and ſuch as confer a ſuperiority felt by all, however it may be acknowledged by few. When it is acknowledged, ſuch praiſe tranſports; and thoſe who receive it ſet themſelves down for every thing that is great and accompliſhed. Alas! they forget, that theſe are ſtill at beſt but in the ſecond claſs of excellence; that in a moral view they are of no value; and that fine diſcourſe and a fine character are things totally diſtinct.

In reality, your beſt talkers are very ſeldom your beſt livers. From their encomiums on virtue, and their declamations againſt vice, they often receive ſuch high pleaſure as with them paſſes for love of the one, and abhorrence of the other; when it is only perhaps a vain complacence in their own powers, joined to that natural ſenſe of right and wrong, which is common to them with all others. In this they reſt, well ſatisfied to leave to others the leſs ſhowy, and more troubleſome part, which belongs to practice. To that alſo ſpeculation is frequently an enemy, in

the ſame manner as familiarity is to reſpect.

Religion, beloved, is a majeſtic form always to be treated with reverence; with affection too, I confeſs, as being likewiſe an amiable form. But this affection reſembles that which a wiſe ſubject would ſhow for his prince, into whoſe friendſhip he found himſelf graciouſly admitted. Such a man would never forget his own ſubordination ſo far, as to drop the reverence due to royalty. If his prince condeſcended to treat him with the openneſs of confidence, and the careſs of joy; yet ſtill would he bear in mind, that he was only a ſubject, and every freedom on his ſide would be tempered with reſpectful modeſty.

Perhaps there is nothing ſo uncommon as to ſpeak of divine objects with the proper veneration. How have I been ſhocked to hear the ſanctimonious, yet audacious, prate of ſome pretenders to religion! Thoſe that have the ſtrongeſt perceptions of it will be moſt ſtruck by its ſublimity, and moſt conſcious how far they fall ſhort of ſo high a ſtandard. By conſequence they will profeſs it with the greateſt modeſty, and mention

it with the utmoſt caution. Thoſe that are moſt intimately acquainted with God and themſelves, will be moſt deeply impreſſed with his grandeur and their own littleneſs, will moſt clearly perceive the difference between knowing his will, and performing it, will feel moſt ſenſibly how much eaſier it is to deſcant on all his perfections than to copy one of them.

In concluſion; let me beſeech you beyond all things, to converſe much with your Maker and yourſelves; to ſtudy his character and your own; to trace his attributes wherever diſplayed; to learn his counſels however revealed; to examine your conſciences, chiefly by the written word; to canvaſs your paſt actions, preſent purſuits, and prevailing views; to approve or condemn, as under his eye; to aſcertain your intereſt in the friendſhip of your Divine Sovereign, and cheriſh an unalterable Faith in his Spirit and Providence, as ever ready to aſſiſt your honeſt though feeble efforts; together with a joyful aſſurance, that if you are not wilfully wanting to yourſelves, you ſhall at laſt attain immortal excellence and glory, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.

SERMON XII.

On Good Works.

1 Tim. ii. 8, 9, 10.

I will—that women adorn themſelves in modeſt apparel, with ſhamefacedneſs and ſobriety; not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or coſtly array, but (which becometh women profeſſing godlineſs) with Good Works.

YOU have ſeen a venerable matron encircled with a race of lovely daughters, all different from one another, yet all marked with an air of mutual reſemblance, and taking jointly after their honoured parent, to whom from time to time they direct their looks with dutiful attention; while ſhe ſmiles on each by turns, ſuperintends their behaviour, and preſcribes their ſeveral occupations, encourages them in every thing praiſe-worthy,

and, with a proper regard to their reſpective talents and diſpoſitions, trains them to growing excellence. In her, my fair ones, you beheld an emblem of Religion. Thus is that moſt dignified of all forms ſurrounded by the Virtues, her beautiful offſpring; thus do they bear the lineaments of their common deſcent, and near affinity; and thus—But I leave you to trace the particulars of the ſimilitude. The general truth on which it is founded, ſeems plainly intimated in our text, where Godlineſs is aſſumed as the leading principle of all that the apoſtle inculcates on women. As women profeſſing Chriſtianity he addreſſes them: and whatever a conſiſtency with that profeſſion demands, he would be underſtood to enjoin. He mentions particularly modeſt apparel, ſhamefacedneſs, ſobriety, and Good Works. It now remains to enforce the laſt of theſe, together with thoſe Kind Affections which they pre-ſuppoſe; and to touch as we go along on their Connexion with the Religious Principles which gave them birth.

But before we proceed, truth requires one mortifying obſervation. It is this, that

amongſt the many women profeſſing godlineſs, the number of thoſe that practiſe it is comparatively ſmall. In all profeſſions the mere pretenders will ever be numerous. They will be moſt ſo, in thoſe that are at once reputable and difficult. That of Religion, as was formerly remarked, is approved of in your ſex even by ſuch as laugh at it in ours. At the ſame time it is certain, that when the habits of piety have not been very early acquired, and very happily directed, by means of a wiſe education, the rareſt as well as the greateſt of bleſſings, the forming of them afterwards will always prove a taſk too arduous, and painful, for the generality of thoſe who are bred to diſſipation and pleaſure.

But then, on the other hand, where this divine principle is cultivated with care and judgment, it is no leſs certain, that we may expect from it the moſt valuable fruits. And firſt; I ſay, that a young woman profeſſing godlineſs with underſtanding, and from choice, will never be wanting in the great article of Filial Duty. On this ſubject, as on many others, the ſubtilty of ſpeculation has put

caſes, which there is little probability of happening in life. But where caſuiſtry is not neceſſary, it is apt to be hurtful, by involving the mind in perplexity and diſtreſs, if not warping the heart from that rectitude and ſimplicity, which, next to the immediate illumination of heaven, are the ſureſt guides to a worthy conduct.

Of filial duty in all its branches ſhe will naturally acquit herſelf beſt, who has the deepeſt ſenſe of religion. "Keep thy father's "commandment, and forſake not the law "of thy mother. Bind them continually "upon thine heart, and tie them about thine "neck. When thou goeſt, it ſhall lead thee; "when thou ſleepeſt, it ſhall keep thee; and "when thou wakeſt, it ſhall talk with thee. "Whoſo revileth his father or his mother, "his lamp ſhall be put out in obſcure "darkneſs. The eye that mocketh at his "father, and deſpiſeth to obey his mother, "the ravens of the valley ſhall pick it out, "and the young eagles ſhall eat it." Jeſus was ſubject unto his parents. "Children, obey "your parents in the Lord: for this is right. "Honour thy father and mother (which is

"the first commandment with promise) that "it may be well with thee, and thou "mayest live long on the earth." All this "a christian daughter has read with attention, and reflects upon with awe. It corresponds, in substance, with the instinct of nature, which it contributes at once to corroborate and exalt. She who truly reverences her parent in heaven, would tremble at the thought of dishonouring his representatives on earth. From their authority she has acquired the idea of his; and this last, including all that can be conceived of great and good, is the commanding idea of her life. If your parents be indeed pious, and you have profited by their instruction and example; how will your natural respect for them be heightened by religious gratitude! You will think of them with secret rapture as the instruments of a happy and immortal existence; your devoutest prayers for their preservation and comfort will daily ascend to the throne of God. Those prayers will, at the same instant, cherish the affections by which they are prompted, and strengthen your reso-

lutions never, for any conſideration, to tranſgreſs the laws of filial piety. For how could they bear to be the wilful authors of pain to thoſe for whoſe felicity they are led by every motive to preſent every day the moſt fervent ſupplications?

But many of you have not the happineſs of ſuch parents as I have ſuppoſed. I am heartily ſorry for it. But the want of principle in your parents will not diſſolve the ties of duty, however it may affect the ſentiments of eſteem: and if you think rightly, it will only excite your endeavours, by every winning, reſpectful way, to promote their reformation; for which you will at the ſame time offer up, from the depth of retirement, your ſighs and vows to him who has the hearts of all in his hand. In truth, I am inclined to believe that if there be any one thing more likely than another to draw down the grace of converſion on a parent, it is ſuch a conduct in a child. Ah, my young friends, what honour and joy would in this caſe be yours! What a noble ſuperiority to thoſe unfeeling creatures of your ſex, who ſhew no ſolicitude with regard to their parents, but how

to obtain from them ſome new article of dreſs or other gratification, on which they have fixed their fooliſh fancies!

But ſome of you complain, that your parents are cruel and tyrannical. I ſympathize with you yet more, if your complaint be juſt. But what do you mean by Cruel and Tyrannical? That they will not indulge your extravagant vanity, or that they chooſe to reſtrain from purſuits, which they are apprehenſive would be hurtful? It is a wiſe and kind ſeverity, if ſeverity it muſt be termed. How much are you indebted to them for preventing, by a little temporary mortification, real and permanent infelicity! Not to ſay, that a ſmall degree of delicacy and conſideration would teach you to ſpare them in points, where your ſtations and their circumſtances concur, it may be, to render your requeſts particularly improper.

But I will ſuppoſe the worſt, that they are really hard-hearted, and unnaturally rigid. It is a mighty trial. To bear it well will require all the fortitude of faith. Here then is an opportunity for diſplaying your principles in their utmoſt power. You are called

forth to the conflict, as into a field of battle, where even your ſex may reap immortal laurels. She is a heroine indeed, whoſe regard for her parents no unkindneſs of theirs can conquer.

But they would force you to ſacrifice your happineſs to a man whom you cannot love. There your ſubmiſſion muſt ſtop. No rules of duty can oblige you to involve yourſelves in miſery and temptation, by entering into engagements to love and to honour, where your hearts withhold their conſent.—Barbarous wretches, and baſe, to offer thus to diſpoſe of your children, as you would of your cattle, to the higheſt bidder; to attempt, againſt every maxim of Nature and Religion, to drag the reluctant victims to the altar, and compel them, in the moſt ſolemn manner, to profeſs what they do not mean, and to vow what they cannot perform!

I am willing however to believe, that ſuch compulſion is uſed but ſeldom. The greateſt danger is leſt you, my unexperienced friends, ſhould be tempted to form the moſt important of all connexions, without the approbation of your parents. What ſhall we ſay in

ſuch a caſe? Where the reſolution is once formed, he that ſhould undertake, by any methods of diſſuaſion, to prevent its being executed, might as well propoſe to check a torrent ruſhing from the top of a mountain. But we would addreſs you while in your ſober ſenſes, before your imagination is perverted and inflamed. Aſſure yourſelves, my young hearers, the ſtep in queſtion is very ſeldom taken but it is ſincerely repented; with this bitter addition, that ſuch repentance can do no good. The paſſion that guided and hurried the parties is quickly abated. There is nothing ſo tranſient, as the enthuſiaſm of mere youthful lovers after marriage. And now that reflexion takes place, and conſequences begin to preſs; a thouſand improprieties, fears, and diſquietudes, unthought of before, riſe up to view, and quite diſenchant our romantic adventurers. It is indeed wonderful, what appearances of firmneſs and ſatisfaction a woman in ſuch a ſituation will wear before the world, in order to juſtify her choice. But ſurely unhappineſs is not leſſened by being devoured in ſecret, and in public diſguiſed. Perpetual

reſtraint is perpetual wretchedneſs—Allow me to repeat it. Under the immediate impulſe of a violent attachment, I ſhould hardly give you or myſelf the trouble to argue: but while you are diſengaged and calm, it may not be amiſs to remind you, that a parent, generally ſpeaking, is much more likely to judge with ſoundneſs for a daughter, than ſhe is for herſelf; that Fancy alone is too ſanguine a counſellor to be a prudent one; that proteſtations of eternal fidelity, of uninterrupted affection, made in the heat of blood, have no ſolid baſis; in a word, that the deliberate advice, which is dictated alike by length of days, knowledge of the world, and earneſt ſolicitude for a child's welfare, ought to be relied upon, rather than the haſty concluſions of juvenile deſire.

After all, it is certain, that the wiſeſt parents may be miſtaken about the man with whom they wiſh a daughter to be connected. But ſhe that marries with the ſanction of their countenance, will from that, and from their continued or even augmented kindneſs, derive in the caſe of diſappointment a conſo-

lation which ſhe could not enjoy, had ſhe brought it on herſelf by her own indiſcretion and obſtinacy.

One thing here muſt not be forgotten; that the reflection of having acted undutifully, in this or any other inſtance of importance, to thoſe who gave you birth, were alone ſufficient to poiſon the whole pleaſure of life; that is, if you be not loſt to every ingenious impreſſion; but eſpecially ſhould their death put it for ever out of your power to make atonement. The horrors of guilt, that in ſuch a circumſtance are apt to haunt and diſtract the mind, more particularly if the parents were uncommonly worthy, I have had repeated opportunities of obſerving, but have no adequate language to expreſs; ſo profound is the conviction implanted by Nature of the ſacredneſs of filial piety!—Need I add, that this extends ſo far as to demand ſubmiſſion in every caſe, where your duty to God or your peace of mind does not interfere?

But it is not ſubmiſſion alone that is demanded; nor will ſhe prove in any relation an amiable character, who does not ſhow herſelf an affectionate daughter. On the other hand,

when a young woman behaves to her parents in a manner particularly tender and reſpectful, I mean from principle as well as nature, there is nothing good or gentle that may not be expected from her, in whatever condition ſhe is placed. Of this I am ſo thoroughly perſuaded, that, were I to adviſe any friend of mine as to his choice of a wife, I know not whether my very firſt counſel would not be, 'Look 'out for one diſtinguiſhed by her attention and 'ſweetneſs to her parents.' The fund of worth and affection indicated by ſuch a behaviour, joined to the habits of duty and conſideration thereby contracted, being transferred to the married ſtate, will not fail to render her a mild and obliging companion.

Your ſituation in life, which keeps you more at home than ſons, together with the turn of your education, and the ſoftneſs of your frame, that fit you for a thouſand little ſoothing offices, as well as domeſtic ſervices, which they cannot properly perform, ſeems to point out to you a peculiar ſphere of filial excellence.—And here I pleaſe myſelf with the thought, that ſome of your boſoms are at this moment throbbing with tenderneſs to-

wards a ſick or aged parent, whom heaven, willing to furniſh a field for the exerciſe of all your gratitude and zeal, has at laſt thrown upon your care. I think I ſee you, my charming friend, like ſome guardian angel, tending day and night the bed of an honoured father, who has loſt your mother, and who is worn out with toil, and years, and pain. I ſee you liſtening, in deepeſt ſilence, to catch the leaſt intimation of his wiſhes. I ſee you watching eagerly every look, to learn his wants before he ſpeaks them; now gently raiſing his languid head to ſmooth the pillow, or miniſter ſome reviving cordial; and then wiping from his reverend face the cold ſweats, that begin perhaps to announce the approach of his end. His groans are anſwered by ſighs ſtealing from you, but ſuddenly ſuppreſſed, for fear of adding to his anxiety on your account. To be the inſtrument of imparting to him a minute's eaſe, is rapture. Mean while the good old man's eyes are now turned to you, with all the unutterable fondneſs of paternal love, melted by thoſe marks of duty; anon they are lifted to heaven in thankſgiving for ſuch a child, and ſupplication for everlaſting bleſſings on

your head.—— Great God! what muſt a mind like yours experience in this conjuncture? Where is the daughter of Diſobedience or Folly that ever felt in the gayeſt hour, a ſatisfaction, a tranſport to be compared with that, which conſcious piety diffuſes through your bleeding heart? Nor will theſe exalted ſenſations be at all diminiſhed, if (Providence having denied the ſupplies which affluence gives) your virtue has prompted you by your labour or ingenuity, or, it may be, by parting with ſome admired ornament worn in your better days, to procure for a parent in thoſe circumſtances neceſſary ſupport, or ſeaſonable refreſhment.

Let me next ſay ſomewhat concerning Sifterly Affection. "Behold how good and how "pleaſant it is for brethren," and ſiſters, "to "dwell together in unity!" Precious ointment is not more grateful to the ſmell, nor morning dew more refreſhing to the ſight, than domeſtic love is to the ſoul. Repreſent to yourſelves a numerous young family, free from care and animoſity, full of reverence for their Maker and their parents, ambitious to pleaſe and to excel; in a word, pious, duti-

ful, friendly, happy; where the good humour and good ſenſe of each contribute to the eaſe and entertainment of all; while thoſe agreeable diverſities of temper and underſtanding that take place amongſt them ſerve, like diſcords in muſic, to carry on the intellectual harmony. Who would not wiſh to be acquainted in ſuch a houſe; who would not conſider it as the abode of felicity? I hope, I paint no unuſual ſcene.

Where the members are but few, felicity perhaps is not ſo often found; unleſs it be in the more ſhady walks of life, where love and innocence delight to frequent. And why is it not? When I ſee two ſiſters, both of them pleaſing and both eſteemed, living together without jealouſy or envy, yielding to one another without affectation, and generouſly contending who ſhall do moſt to advance the conſequence and happineſs of her friend; I am highly delighted: dare I add the more highly, that ſuch characters are not very common! And why are they not? The love of a ſiſter for her brothers is much more uſual. Whence does this too proceed? Examine your own hearts on theſe ſeveral points. Poſ-

ſibly they can explain to you the difference, ſo obſervable where there is a competition, and where there is none, or where any tendencies towards it are happily loſt in the involutions of a larger number.

Martha of Bethany was on the whole a worthy woman. She certainly loved her Saviour with ſincere devotion. Her ſolicitude to entertain him in the beſt manner ſhe could deviſe, was the reſult of her reſpect. But it was carried to an extreme; and her ſiſter's conduct ſhould have taught her wiſdom. Inſtead of this, ſhe grows peeviſh, and complains of that ſiſter. She is admoniſhed of her fault, while Mary is commended for her better behaviour. "Martha, Martha, thou "art careful and troubled about many things: "but one thing is needful; and Mary hath "choſen that good part which ſhall not be "taken away from her." What pity that any tincture of ill humour, under whatever diſguiſe, ſhould have place in any breaſt where Jeſus is revered! Surely there is nothing more beautiful in a chriſtian woman than good temper and kind affection upon all occaſions.

I was once acquainted with a lady, who ſeemed to be held up by Providence, as an example of the joint power of theſe and of divine principle. She loſt her father early. Her mother's want of health made it neceſſary for her to exert herſelf with double aſſiduity and attention, in a family by no means ſmall, of which ſhe was the eldeſt child. She was naturally active, to a degree very uncommon in one of her diſpoſition, which was the ſofteſt and meekeſt that can be conceived. She had imbibed from her infancy the deepeſt ſenſe of devotion, that I have ever known. It was a devotion of that kind, which, meeting with a heart originally upright, produces uniform excellence. Such excellence was hers. When, in the courſe of a few years, her extraordinary character recommended her to the choice of a man of ſingular worth, and good fortune; ſhe did not, with the ſelfiſhneſs common on ſuch occaſions, forget her mother or the family ſhe had left behind her; but continued, with the entire approbation and cordial concurrence of her huſband, to manifeſt her filial and ſiſterly regards in the moſt effectual manner. She was none of thoſe narrow-ſouled

women, who no ſooner ſtep into houſes of their own, than they ſeem to have all their affections and ideas abſorbed in their new condition; relinquiſhing at once the beſt companions of their youth; dropping the pen of friendly correſpondence, and ſhrinking up into a little wretched circle of anxieties, that exclude every liberal ſentiment, and every enlarged connexion. When the mother of this lady died, which happened not long after, ſhe became a mother to the helpleſs orphans, ſuperintended their education, watched over their deportment, promoted their ſettlement in the world, and ſympathized with them in all their diſtreſſes. When they alſo ſpread out into families, ſhe acted like a parent to their children.—To her own, of whom ſhe had many, bleſſed Lord, what a parent! Was it poſſible for them not to love one another, with ſuch a pattern before them, and with ſuch inſtructions as ſhe gave them? For they too were deprived of their father, while the greater part were very young. Her inſtructions were pious and wiſe: but it was her example, it was that ineffable charm of humble worth and modeſt dignity, of maternal com-

placence and mildneſs almoſt unparalleled, which rendered them irreſiſtible, and diffuſed amongſt all about her the ſpirit of amity and the ſmile of happineſs. You will not be ſurpriſed if I ſubjoin, that there were many other families who ſhared in her labours of love, and among the reſt a very large one, the Poor; whoſe bleſſings attended her through life, and whoſe tears followed her to the grave; for, when ſhe died, they alſo had loſt a mother. It is hard to ſay upon the whole, whether ſhe was moſt beloved, or venerated, by thoſe who knew her. But I uſed to think that, wherever ſhe appeared, her preſence inſpired ſenſations ſomewhat like thoſe we ſhould probably feel, if we beheld a good angel.

And thus I come naturally to ſpeak of Good Works in a comprehenſive view; that is, thoſe which proceed from kindneſs and compaſſion in general. When ſuch diſpoſitions predominate, let it be obſerved, in the firſt place, that they are ingenious to diſcover, and diligent to improve, thoſe ways and means of beneficence, which paſs unregarded by the giddy and unfeeling. Many of you, my honoured audience, have it not in your power,

through the obſcurity of your ſituation, and the ſtraitneſs of your circumſtances, to indulge the generous propenſions of your nature. While thouſands of your ſex are inflamed with the emulation of beauty, or agitated by the conflict of rivalſhip, or miſerable becauſe they cannot be gratified with ſuch an article of ſhow, or admitted into ſuch a party of pleaſure; you are ſighing, becauſe not able more extenſively to ſuccour indigence, or more effectually to comfort ſorrow. Your ſighs, beloved, are heard in heaven; your wiſhes are regiſtered there under the head of Virtues; the willing mind is accepted now, and ſhall be recompenſed at the reſurrection of the juſt; your leaſt good deed ſhall not be forgotten by him, who marked and applauded the widow's mite. "Whoſoever ſhall give to drink" unto a follower of Jeſus "a cup of cold water "only, in the name of a diſciple, verily I "ſay unto you, he ſhall in no wiſe loſe his "reward." You ſhall be eſtimated by the largeneſs of your hearts, not by the ſize of your fortunes. "The liberal ſoul, that deviſeth "liberal things," that executes what it can, and ſtops only where it muſt, or rather goes

on panting and praying for that happineſs to the human race, which it cannot have the joy of imparting;—how honourable in the ſight of God!

Let me remind you farther of what ought alſo to ſolace you amidſt all your kind cares. Human happineſs is made up of many little ingredients, with a few principal ones; and next to religion, thoſe in reality contribute to it moſt largely, who give the greateſt conſolation by their ſympathy, and the greateſt pleaſure by their friendſhip. Friendſhip and ſympathy, when thoroughly awake, are conſtantly employed in numberleſs pleaſing ſervices, and amiable attentions, to which language cannot appropriate names; but which the heart of the perſon obliged feels, and which rebounds with redoubled delight on the heart of the perſon obliging. I go farther, and ſay, that the very idea of your being diſpoſed to oblige is obligation; becauſe it is in itſelf agreeable, and we are indebted to every one that ſupplies us with an agreeable idea.

Who has not likewiſe remarked, that in doing benevolent things there is, both as to the time and the manner, a propriety which

gives ineſtimable value even to the leaſt? The manner, in particular, is of marvellous effect. A charitable action gracefully done is twice done. To ſome people one would be willing to owe almoſt every thing, ſo handſomely do they confer a kindneſs; while from others a favour, for the oppoſite reaſon, is a load. But who ſo capable of delighting by the manner, yet more than by the deed itſelf, as a lovely young woman, whoſe words, and ſmiles, and ſoftneſs, are, to the laſt of theſe, what a beautiful ſymphony and judicious accompaniment in muſick are to a well managed voice?

But, in truth, the advantages which your ſex and age afford you in this divine employment of doing good, are not to be expreſſed. Would to God your zeal were but in proportion to it!—Forgive me, Proteſtants, if on this occaſion I remark with concern, how far many of you are outdone by multitudes in the Church of Rome, eſpecially amongſt her female votaries. Their frequent viſits to the abodes of misfortune and pain, of poverty and ſickneſs, their gentle miniſtrations to the ſufferers, their ſtooping ſo meekly to the

meaneſt offices of compaſſion, offices of which the moſt diſtant thought would ſhock the falſe refinement of a gay lady, have to me, I muſt own, notwithſtanding all the errors of their faith, ſtill placed them in a point of light highly reſpectable and engaging. Who can help me to a reaſon, why a practice ſo Chriſt-like is not adopted in this country, where the goſpel is profeſſed in ſo much purity? are we afraid of being thought to embrace the doctrine of Merit by good works, entertained in that church? It cannot be, amongſt thoſe who have learnt the truth at it is in Jeſus. None ſurely was ever more ſelf-denied on this head than St. Paul; yet St. Paul was a flame of charity. In his doctrine, and in his conduct, grace and virtue, faith and good works, went hand in hand, inſeparable and triumphant.

Ah, ye fair ones of Britain, who doat on the parade of public aſſemblies, and fail along in the full blown pride of faſhionable attire, of which the leaſt appendage or circumſtance muſt not be diſcompoſed; thoughtleſs of human wo; inſenſible to modeſt worth at that moment pining in many a ſolitary reſidence of want—ye gaudy flutterers, "with

"hard hearts under ſoft raiment;" how much more brilliant and beautiful would ye appear in the eye of ſaints and angels, were ye now and then to exchange thoſe ſcenes of ſelfiſh ſplendor for the gloomy dwellings of wretchedneſs, in order to light them up by your pity and beneficence! I bluſh for many of my countrywomen, poſſeſſed of fortune, who have never yet learnt its nobleſt and happieſt uſe; in whoſe ears the circulated whiſper of a well-dreſſed crowd admiring their appearance, is a more grateful ſound than the praiſe of widows and orphans ſharing their bounty; who prefer the empty breath of adulation to the bleſſings of them that were ready to periſh.

God be thanked, there are exceptions. Among the reſt I recollect, with peculiar pleaſure, one lady of rank, whoſe name is never mentioned by thoſe who know her, without calling up the image of Charity; who having no family of her own, has adopted the indigent and deſerving; whoſe whole life, not a ſhort one, has been devoted to munificence; who, in a word, ſeems to regard her wealth merely as a fund depoſited in her hands by

the Almighty, to be laid out with the ſtricteſt faithfulneſs for the god-like purpoſe of making thouſands happy. Exalted creature! how honourable, independant of thy birth; how bleſſed, to underſtand ſo well the deſtination of riches! A rare, and, as it ſhould ſeem from this circumſtance, a difficult ſcience! Juſtly might the poet exclaim,

" The rich muſt labour to poſſeſs their own,
" To feel their great abundance; and requeſt
" Their humble friends to help them to be bleſt;
" To ſee their treaſures, hear their glory told,
" And aid the wretched impotence of gold."

He adds indeed,

" But ſome, great ſouls! and touch'd with
" warmth divine,
" Give gold a price, and teach its beams to ſhine.
" All hoarded treaſures they repute a load;
" Nor think their wealth their own, till well be-
" ſtow'd."

Amongſt the properties of the Virtuous Woman, in that celebrated paſſage formerly ſurveyed, it is ſaid, " She ſtreteheth forth her " hand to the poor, and reacheth her hand to

" the needy :" On which it has been remarked, that after her induſtry for the acquiring of wealth is deſcribed, her liberality is next mentioned, as being the principal uſe ſhe made of it, and precedes her providing ſcarlet for her houſhold, or fine linen and purple for herſelf. What ſhall we call thoſe women, who either never think of the poor at all, or never till they have firſt ſacrificed to ſuperfluity and pride?

Where are thoſe female penitents of this land, that, like her of Judea, convert the inſtruments of their former folly and extravagance into matter of humiliation and piety; that conſecrate, ſo to ſpeak, the ſpoils of Vice, by offering them at the feet of their Saviour, while they proſtrate themſelves there in deep contrition?——The poor you have always with you; and by ſhowing mercy to them you may at once ſhow your reſpect for him, and help to enſure mercy for yourſelves.

It is worthy your obſervation, that in the liſt of female names recorded in ſcripture with renown, that of Tabitha ſtands marked with a particular note of approbation, as " a diſci- " ple who was full of Good Works, and

" alms which ſhe did." What a glorious memorial! And what additional honour does it receive from the account immediately following! This excellent woman dies. An apoſtle is in the neighbourhood. He is ſent for in haſte; he arrives; he is conducted to the chamber of the deceaſed. Her female friends ſtand by him " weeping and ſhowing " him the coats and garments which ſhe had " made" for the poor. How natural a circumſtance; and how eloquent! He felt it; " kneeled down and prayed, and turning him " to the body ſaid," with a voice of power, " Tabitha, ariſe;" working a miracle to reſtore a life ſo uſeful. From this amiable perſon's being denominated in the hiſtory a Diſciple, I would only remark, that in thoſe days a Chriſtian was known and characterized by real excellence: whereas every thing now is a chriſtian, not excepting her who never, but when forced, went into the houſe of mourning; never knew the joy of giving purely for the love of God, without expecting any thing again; let me add, never denied herſelf one trapping of Vanity to clothe the naked, nor one indulgence of Luxury to feed the hungry.

Alas! my poor friend, what wilt thou ſay for thyſelf at the tribunal of Jeſus? I leave with thee that queſtion: anſwer it to thy conſcience, as in the preſence of thy judge. You have read the proceſs which he will obſerve, nor can you have forgot it.

On theſe points it were eaſy to enlarge at great length, and with exact method. I am willing however to hope that, by the grace of God, a few hints thus thrown out with plainneſs and affection, may ſuffice to every mind that is open to the ſentiments of humanity; but eſpecially to every heart that is impreſſed with the principles of religion. It is theſe principles, my honoured hearers, that ſerve beyond every thing elſe to enlarge and inſpire thoſe ſentiments. It is the love of God, the faith of Jeſus, and the hope of immortality, that chiefly expand affection, and animate zeal. The divine character is the ſovereign ſtandard of benevolence, the chriſtian inſtitution its brighteſt diſplay, and a happy futurity its higheſt reward. Can you worſhip the Univerſal Father, and not feel for his family? Can you believe in the Common Saviour, and not live to thoſe for whom he died? Can you

contemplate yonder world of friendſhip, and not anticipate its joys, and not cheriſh an ambition that your works of charity may praiſe you in the gates of heaven?

SERMON XIII.

On Female Meekneſs.

1 Pet. iii. 3, 4.

Whoſe adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel: but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a Meek and Quiet Spirit, which is in the ſight of God of great price.

THE apoſtle of the Circumciſion, like him of the Gentiles, ſeems to have been no ſtranger to female nature, or to what becomes it. Both were ſufficiently aware, that ornament was a favourite object with women; and both were too well acquainted with the arts of perſuaſion, to think of combating the general idea. It was their buſi-

neſs to make the beſt uſe of ſuch a handle. Accordingly their converts of that ſex might continue to ſtudy embelliſhment as much as ever; only thoſe inſpired teachers wiſhed them to direct it right, by turning their chief care to that which was of greateſt value and longeſt duration, namely, "the hidden "man of the heart." The doctrine of St. Paul on this point we have examined very fully. That of St. Peter, now read, we propoſe for the ground-work of our concluding diſcourſe, with a view to complete the plan which we have proſecuted thus far. We have reſerved it for this place, as believing, that Meekneſs, cultivated on Chriſtian principles, is the proper conſummation, and higheſt finiſhing, of Female excellence. The ſubject being ſo important, may we not hope to be ſtill honoured with your attention?

I begin with obſerving, that the virtue in queſtion has its Foundation in the Softer Compoſition of the ſex. That there is a ſex in minds was hinted before. This original diſtinction has never, I think, been better underſtood than by our great epic poet. As in his admired work of Paradiſe Loſt he has

with equal judgment and delicacy marked, throughout, the ſeparate characters of the Firſt Pair; ſo, in two lines, he has happily expreſſed the principal objects of their reſpective deſtinations:

"For contemplation He, and valour form'd;
"For ſoftneſs She, and ſweet attractive grace."

The virtue of meekneſs, it is true, our religion requires of all without exception. Moſes is celebrated for it in an eminent degree; and our Saviour characterizes himſelf by the epithets Meek and Lowly. The diſpoſition, in general, may be conſidered as Charity's firſt-born, appearing in all the mildeſt attitudes of forbearance, gentleneſs, and peace. But ſtill in men, it may be often found connected with the greateſt boldneſs, and moſt undaunted magnanimity. Much for the honour of true courage, it has been obſerved, that the braveſt minds are commonly the moſt humane, generous, and forgiving. Theſe ſeveral qualities are beautifully blended in many parts of the hiſtory of that man of God juſt now mentioned. Nor can you have forgotten the calm hero-

iſm of our divine Deliverer, together with that dignity of goodneſs which dwelt about him, in circumſtances of the deepeſt humiliation and ſorrow.

As for you, my fair pupils, we no doubt wiſh you to poſſeſs ſuch fortitude as implies reſolution, wherever your virtue, duty, or reputation, is concerned. But along with that we expect to find, on other ſubjects, a timidity peculiar to your ſex; and alſo a degree of complacence, yieldingneſs, and ſweetneſs, beyond what we look for in men. Neither do we, ſo far as I know, ever rank amongſt feminine qualities Valour, ſtrictly ſo called. A woman heading an army, ruſhing into the thickeſt of the foe, ſpreading ſlaughter and death around her, or returning from the field of battle covered with duſt and blood, would ſurely to a civilized nature ſuggeſt ſhocking ideas.

Your beſt emblem, beloved, is the ſmiling form of peace, robed in white, and bearing a branch of olive. Like the apoſtles and firſt chriſtians, your higheſt glory is to conquer by benignity, and triumph by patience. Roughneſs, and even ferociouſneſs, in a man,

we often overlook, and are ſometimes diverted with. In a woman, we are always hurt by them. A loud voice, a bold geſture, a daring countenance, every mark of bravery, ſhall pleaſe in the former, when his courage is particularly called forth: but in a female we wiſh nothing to reign but love and tenderneſs; and where they do reign, they will produce very different effects.

No, my friends, you were not made for ſcenes of danger and oppoſition. I repeat it again; fearfulneſs to a certain degree becomes you; not that cowardice, which many of you ſhow, and ſome of you affect, on every trifling occaſion, and frequently without any occaſion at all. Such behaviour is in you childiſh, and to us unintereſting; if not an object of contempt. But a worthy woman, ſhrinking from manifeſt hazard, or threatened violence, we are always forward and proud to protect; while, on the other hand, an intrepid female ſeems to renounce our aid, and in ſome reſpect to invade our province. We turn away, and leave her to herſelf.

Let it be likewiſe obſerved, that in your ſex manly exerciſes are never graceful; that

in them a tone and figure, as well as an air and deportment, of the maſculine kind, are always forbidding; and that men of ſenſibility deſire in every woman ſoft features, and a flowing voice, a form not robuſt, and a demeanour delicate and gentle. Theſe are conſidered as alike requiſite and natural; I mean, where there is any taſte for elegance. I am even inclined to believe that, ſuppoſing other circumſtances equal, the coarſeſt clown would be better pleaſed with them than with their oppoſites.

Yet farther, the aptitude obſervable, in all the better kind of women, to commiſerate and comfort, to melt into tears at the ſight or hearing of diſtreſs, to take the care of children, to play and prattle with thoſe pretty innocents, to mingle in all the mild ſympathies and tender charities of life; the wonderful dexterity with which they diſarm fierceneſs, and appeaſe wrath; the powerful eloquence they diſplay in aſſuaging the cares, and calming the ſorrows, of thoſe men with whom they are connected; their ſtrong propenſity to an union of hearts, and their unutterable fondneſs where it takes place;—

theſe lovely peculiarities in their temperament, theſe finer tunings of their minds, ſeem additional proofs, that ſoftneſs is your proper attribute. Womaniſh Softneſs, as it is ſtyled, has never been imputed to any man by way of reproach, without a tacit acknowledgment of this truth in your favour. In the male compoſition, it is certainly a blemiſh wherever found; in the female, a beauty.

From theſe remarks, I think it appears, that the baſis of the virtue we now recommend is laid in the original make, or ſpecific character of the ſex. The Superſtructure which Chriſtianity raiſes upon it, or, in other words, the improvements it receives from religious principles, ſhall be our next conſideration.

The goſpel is, in truth, the religion of human nature; building charity and all virtue on whatever is kind, ingenuous, or praiſeworthy in that; correcting its diſorders, mitigating its diſtreſſes, ſupporting its weakneſſes, and from each educing good, by turning them into matter of humility and circumſpection, of faith and reſignation, of

docility and meekneſs. Theſe are all connected together; but the firſt and laſt are nearly allied. They are twin-ſiſters. Humility is ever diſpoſed to ſerve; and ſhe affords the other ſingular aſſiſtance.

They that have a juſt ſenſe of their own infirmities and failings, will be naturally of an unpretending, a forbearing, and a forgiving temper. The reverſe of this is the genuine offspring of Pride. A proud character was never a meek one; whereas there is no act of kindneſs, no inſtance of condeſcenſion, which the ſelf-diffident are not ready to perform. They enter thoroughly into the ſpirit of thoſe precepts that require chriſtians to "be courteous, to condeſcend to men of low "eſtate, and in honour to prefer one ano-"ther."

Picture in your own minds a young lady, lively, agreeable, careſſed; as yet unacquainted with her Maker, with herſelf, and with the claims which ſociety has on every reaſonable being that is ſent into life. The magic power of Fancy, ſet to work by vanity, ambition, and hope, creates a kind of world within, to which ſhe fondly refers that with

out, as always ſubordinate, and chiefly ſubſervient. In this little empire "ſhe ſits as "queen, and ſaith in her heart, I ſhall ſee "no ſorrow," and dreams of conqueſt and triumph, of ſplendid houſes and ſhining equipages, of paſſionate lovers and diſappointed rivals, with nameleſs enchanting viſions more, which may never be realized, but which ſhe regards as the moſt certain realities; ſo certain, that he who ſhould attempt to undeceive her would run the riſk of being hated as her greateſt enemy. This world of phantoms, it is true, is always fluctuating: the gay and the gloomy ſucceed by turns. But in each our conceited fair one is ſtill the principal figure; and the value of every thing is meaſured, according as it contributes to her importance and elevation. Hence innumerable illuſions, and ungoverned paſſions; the ſwelling of ſelf-ſufficiency, and the ſtatelineſs of diſdain; violent reſentment, or ſullen diſcontent, if not treated with the reſpect ſhe ſuppoſes to be her due; in fine, a total inattention to the expectations of others, and abſolute inſenſibility to whatever is beautiful in an unaſſuming, or noble in a diſintereſted be-

haviour. Now what is it that can diſpel this viſionary ſcene, and diſabuſe the much deluded ſorcereſs! Nothing ſo effectual as Chriſtianity.

If it ſhould pleaſe the Almighty to impreſs upon her heart its ſacred doctrines, they will ſhow her, in the moſt affecting lights, her own littleneſs, the degeneracy and miſery of corrupted nature, the emptineſs of temporal and the reality of eternal things, the duty ſhe owes to her Maker, her Redeemer, and her fellow-creatures; with the neceſſity of ſecuring the divine favour, by a life of faith, contrition, and charity. By ſuch views, the fantaſtic ſtructures of Pride will be preſently brought down; and on their ruins the plain and modeſt, but pleaſing and graceful fabric of Meekneſs, will be eaſily raiſed. To ſpeak without a metaphor: She will be delivered from the chief cauſes of ill humour; ſuch, for inſtance, as the obſtinacy of ſelf-will, the exorbitance of ſelf-love, a paſſion for thoſe gratifications that at once diſappoint and enervate, and, finally, the expectation of too much homage, and too many compliances. The ſalvation of her ſoul, and the ſpirit of

her Saviour, will become her principal objects: every virtue connected with these, will be her habitual study; and among the rest "peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, "meekness." With such a temper she will not be apt to think herself affronted; that revengeful disposition, of which your sex have been accused even to a proverb, will be her abhorrence; she will not dare, for a moment, to with-hold from others that forgiveness, which she is conscious of wanting from the great God to herself; and as for her behaviour in general to those about her, it will breathe that winning mildness, which seems to me the most distinguishing lineament in the image of Jesus.

He, my sisters, was the perfect model of kindness and courtesy. The Friend of man was his characteristic. He conversed with those whom the world despised; he stood still to hear the cries, and relieve the miseries, of the wretched; he even stooped (astonishing goodness!) to wash the feet of his own disciples; "the son of man came not to be "ministered unto, but to minister." The greatness of humility, and the beauty of

compaſſion, he exemplified on all occaſions. He ſhowed by his own practice, that there is nothing more becoming than the tear of generous ſorrow, nothing ſo ſoothing as the language of a benevolent heart. Jeſus weeping over the grave of Lazarus, conſoling his mournful ſiſters, and inſtructing the ſolemn circle in the ideas of immortality, with the means of attaining it, is ſurely an object by infinite degrees more intereſting and glorious, than all the conquerors of the earth crowned with laurels, and riding on the car of triumph, with numberleſs captives in their train.

His inſtitution is of a piece with his character. It includes the grand principles of univerſal humanity. Every wall of partition between the nations it throws down; aboliſhing the narrow diſtinction of Jews and Gentiles, and exploding the illiberal oppoſition of Greeks to Barbarians. The ſpirit of conqueſt for the ſake of power it diſcourages, while it proclaims, enforces, and inſpires "peace on earth, and good-will towards "men;" whom it teaches to conſider and love as brethren, forming one great family

under one common parent, held together by charity as the bond of perfection, and of ſuch account with the Supreme, that he gave his only begotten Son to ſave them.

Need I labour to prove how ſweetly ſuch diſcoveries as theſe coincide with the diſpoſitions to modeſty, ſympathy, generoſity, the deſire of pleaſing, the dread of violence, the horror at barbarity, the promptneſs to cheriſh tender ſentiments, and form endearing connexions, which are ſo natural to the worthieſt part of your ſex?

The virtues of a Roman Matron, in the better times of that republic, appear on ſome accounts to have been greatly reſpectable. They were ſuch as might be looked for, from her education amongſt a people where ideas of proweſs, patriotiſm, and glory, ran high; where, in effect, theſe things were regarded as the ſummit of human excellence and felicity. But not to inſiſt on the national pride, and ungenerous prepoſſeſſions, on which thoſe ideas were founded; it is manifeſt to me, that whatever force or grandeur the female mind might in other views derive from them, ſuch advantage was over-balanced by the loſs or

the diminution of that gentleneſs and ſoftneſs, which ever were, and ever will be, the ſovereign charm of the female character. Nor do I wiſh the women of Great Britain, who profeſs a ſyſtem ſo much more juſt, amiable, and happy, to adopt for the regulation of their temper any ſtandard different from that in my text.

Some of the moſt agreeable and important Conſequences of a meek and quiet ſpirit in your ſex, let us now proceed to ſurvey. Where nature has beſtowed any kind of perſonal beauty, be it ever ſo inconſiderable; how early is it known, and at what pains are the generality of the too conſcious poſſeſſors to diſplay it, on all occaſions, to the utmoſt advantage! But Nature has endowed the greater part of the ſex with a conſtitutional Softneſs, which, under right direction, would render them unſpeakably more pleaſing than any poſſible attraction that is purely external. Yet how few of you ſeem acquainted with its proper uſe, ſo as to turn it to any valuable account. What eſteem might you not procure, and what happineſs communicate; if, inſtead of employing this ſoftneſs,

ly to foſter paſſion in yourſelves or others, made it ſubſervient to all the amiable poſes of a mild and obliging behaviour! ow prepoſterous to think of any allurement, ather than that which ſhould chiefly adorn you as Women!

The gift I ſpeak of is imparted in different degrees, and with various mixtures; nor will any culture prevent a diverſity from appearing in individuals, with regard to this, as well as other features of the female mind: neither indeed ought it. Such diverſity is not only beautiful in itſelf, but agreeably adapted to the various and different taſtes of men. But ſtill ſome portion of the quality under conſideration is abſolutely eſſential to feminine excellence. Like every other one, no doubt, it requires the guard of Virtue and the guidance of Diſcretion. The truth is that any good diſpoſition you can name, how laudable or how eminent ſoever, if you could ſuppoſe it to be found alone, would conſtitute a character extremely imperfect, and produce effects ſufficiently hurtful. Where an eaſineſs of temper is particularly prevalent, and the heart

uncommonly ſuſceptible of warm emotions in the way of love and friendſhip; there, without queſtion, a peculiar ſtrain of prudence and fortitude is required, to prevent a young perſon's being betrayed into great inconveniencies, and dangerous tenderneſſes. But while I conſider meekneſs as the crowning grace of a woman, it will be naturally underſtood that ſome ſhare of the virtues and accompliſhments before recommended is pre-ſuppoſed.

A cultivated mind and delicate ſpirit, together with ſtrict principles of conduct, will teach you to make the neceſſary diſtinctions amongſt thoſe you converſe with, to join caution with freedom, and, while with a graceful eaſe you give to others what their characters claim, with a modeſt firmneſs to ſupport your own. There are few things, perhaps, more contemptible than an undiſtinguiſhing female, who can ſmile alike upon all, who ſeems prepared for every addreſs, who looks as if the freeſt would not be unwelcome, who ſcatters herſelf amongſt promiſcuous objects; who, if I may be indulged the expreſſion, proſtitutes to every vagrant

eye, and every new comer, any mental charms ſhe may poſſeſs, inſtead of preſerving them for the intimacies of virtuous love, or of ſacred friendſhip. You will readily conceive, that the deportment I would enforce is ſomething widely different.

In effect, were religious and moral conſiderations ſet aſide, ſuch women would not be very pleaſing on the footing of female ſoftneſs alone. Coquettes have commonly but little ſenſibility. Their natural graces, if any they had, are loſt in levity and affectation. While they court the regards of all, they have none to beſtow upon any. Let what was ſaid long ago be here remembered, that a forward appearance, and light demeanour, immediately diſguſt a man of the leaſt delicacy; who, if he be weak enough to love the courtſhip, has commonly however ſo much perception as not to approve of her who offers it. But good-nature, under the government of good ſenſe and real worth, will engage our eſteem without flattering our folly, and reach that juſt ſtandard of the female character, which conſiſts in a fine compoſition of gentleneſs and dignity, of ſweet complacence

and virtuous reſerve, the happy medium ſo hard to hit between Prudery and its oppoſite extreme.

As the former of theſe is moſt directly repugnant to that lovely quality which we are now conſidering, I will proceed to offer a few remarks upon it; willing to rectify the notions were it but of one of your ſex, on a ſubject which, in the preſent age, may be reckoned, by ſevere judges, leaſt of all neceſſary in diſcourſing to young women.

That a prudiſh behaviour is never ſincere I will not take upon me to affirm. It may ariſe ſometimes from an original frigidity, or ſtrange inſenſibility of make. I ſpeak not of the diſlikes that women conceive to particular men, while from others they are by no means unſuſceptible of kind impreſſions. Neither do I ſpeak of thoſe females whoſe firſt addreſs is frequently forbidding, occaſioned by a peculiar reſervedneſs of manner rather than temper, not at all incompatible with good affection; ſince it evidently wears off in a little, and that exceſſive baſhfulneſs gives place, on proper encouragement, to a carriage equally courteous and modeſt. But

where a woman bears amongſt candid ſpirits the character of a prude, there I muſt confeſs myſelf tempted to doubt both her honeſty and her underſtanding.

This we are ſure of, that it is very common or people to affect moſt the appearance of thoſe virtues which they leaſt poſſeſs. What ey want in reality they would fain ſupply in ow, afraid of ſuſpicion, where they are con- ous of guilt; whereas thoſe that are ſound heart, are ſeldom apprehenſive of being ſpected. "A good man ſhall be ſatisfied "from himſelf," and generally leaves others to collect his principles from his practice. An honeſt confidence in the rectitude of his own intentions begets a ſimplicity of manners, that deſpiſes oſtentation in all caſes, and ſuperſedes profeſſion in moſt. I do not mean Religious Profeſſion, which a good man will never think unneceſſary, though he will always make it with modeſty. In ſhort, true virtue, whether male or female, is like the ſun, beſt ſeen in its own light.

Of a defect of ſenſe I look on prudery as an indiſputable proof. It never ſucceeds in its attempts to impoſe. A woman of this cha-

racter is conſidered by our ſex as a hypocrite, by yours as a hypocrite and a ſpy at the ſame time. Both are incited to a keener inſpection into her conduct. On the leaſt failure, both are provoked to ſharper reproach; and ſhould the ungracious diſſembler at laſt drop her diſguiſe altogether, the triumph over her is univerſal: nor does the world ever forget a miſcarriage which was preceded by pretenſions to ſuperior ſtrictneſs. In any caſe ſhe is a diſagreeable creature, whom none can love, and whom moſt will ſhun. How juſt the words of an elegant writer on this ſubject!

"Virtue is amiable, mild, ſerene;
"Without all beauty, and all peace within:
"The honour of a prude is rage and ſtorm;
"'Tis uglineſs in its moſt frightful form."

Should ſuch a woman live to grow old in the ſingle ſtate, ſhe will be regarded with a mixture of hatred and contempt. When I ſay this, every one will recollect the imputation which has been ſo frequently brought againſt Unmarried females at that age. Is it an unpleaſant idea? The inference is plain.

Let it be your care to lay in now ſuch a ſtore of good humour and chriſtian meekneſs, as mingling with other agreeable acquiſitions, may prevent the advance of life from ſpoiling your chearfulneſs, or robbing you of that benignity which communicates a grace to every condition, and of that conſequence which youth and beauty alone cannot preſerve. Eſtabliſh it betimes as a certain maxim, that to be married is neither the one, nor the chief thing needful. Are all in that ſtate happy? Or muſt ſhe be neceſſarily unhappy, who is not in that ſtate? May not a ſingle woman be wiſe and virtuous? and if wiſe and virtuous will ſhe not be contented? and if contented, is ſhe not happy in the beſt ſenſe, as much ſo as can be expected in the mixed and variable lot of mortals? Is there any thing wrong in this reaſoning? If it be right now, will it not be right ten, fifteen, twenty years hence? And in the mean while do you not ſee women in the ſituation ſuppoſed, who from the goodneſs of their temper, breeding, and underſtanding, are objects of tender regard; a regard ſo much the more valuable, that it is entertained by the worthieſt of their acquaint-

ance, that it is no longer a tribute levied by the power of beauty, or aided by the influence of cuſtom, but the pure reward of genuine merit, a merit tried by time, and matured by reflexion?

But do ye imagine, that thoſe only are diſregarded and avoided who are peeviſh, fretful or ſuſpicious from age? Depend upon it, that ſuch diſpoſitions are always diſguſting; were ſhe that indulges them blooming as the ſpring, or beautiful as the day. No heart was ever won by diſdain; no lover was ever kept by coldneſs. A man, whom the extravagance of his paſſion has weakened, may ſubmit for a while to the petulant airs, and even inſolent treatment, of a female that is handſome and young. Nay, ſuch is the debility ſometimes produced by this paſſion in men of little ſpirit or low underſtanding, that bad uſage, blended with fits of kindneſs, ſhall actually make them doat the more. But what ſhall we ſay of that woman, who finding a man in her power ſports with his heart, and to ſhow her dominion plays the tyrant? Alas! ſhe knows not that true greatneſs conſiſts in generoſity, that a graceful compliance is in-

expreſſibly pleaſing, and that a man of worth may be for ever obliged by a noble frankneſs. She forgets too how ſoon an immoderate fondneſs is cured by connubial familiarity, and what ſevere revenge may be taken after marriage by him whom ſhe treated ill before it, were he diſpoſed to retaliate.

But you want to maintain your dignity; and why not? Would you do it in the moſt effectual manner? Worth and underſtanding are the proper means. Haughtineſs is always little, violence impotent, and peeviſhneſs the infirmity of a child. Worth and underſtanding confer a conſequence that is ſeldom in danger of being deſpiſed. She who ſhows a juſt ſenſe of what belongs to her as a woman, and as a Chriſtian, will engage reſpect without ſeeking to command it. From her a word, a look expreſſive of virtuous diſdain or pious indignation, will daſh the boldeſt offender, if not uncommonly obdurate indeed. Nor can ſhe probably be often obliged to bear the company of a wretch, who is proof againſt the lightning of excellence provoked. Be aſſured, on the other ſide, that good nature well placed will never leſſen your value.

Look up, my fair ones, to the Firſt Lady of this land, and learn affability; learn to know, that however grandeur may ſecure external reverence, it is goodneſs only that inſpires heart-felt eſteem; that Royalty itſelf derives luſtre from Meekneſs; and that the higheſt prerogative of rank is the power of imparting felicity more largely. Happy prince! thus to have found a companion, by whoſe chearful temper and gentle manners the cares of government are ſoftened, and that ſatisfaction is enjoyed at home, which the ſplendor of a crown cannot confer. Illuſtrious pair! live long bleſſed in each other and in your children, bright examples of nuptial ſanctity, parental affection, and domeſtic joy.—The perſonage I ſpeak of ſeems ſo thoroughly good, ſo naturally obliging, that I cannot doubt but ſhe would have proved ſuch in any ſtation. But certain it is, that from thoſe who are placed in the higher walks of life, a little condeſcenſion, a little favour, gives great delight. Is it not wonderful that women of birth and fortune ſhould not pleaſe more generally, when they might pleaſe at ſo cheap a rate?

But not to dwell on theſe accidental diſtinctions; what man is not charmed with an amiable courteouſneſs in any young woman, eſpecially if otherwiſe attractive? Even common civility is grateful. But would ye be reſiſtleſs? Acquire a habit of fixed attention. It is a ſort of ſilent flattery truly exquiſite, and with all perfectly innocent. To the moſt attentive perſon in company you may obſerve the converſation almoſt always directed; while by interruption, liſtleſſneſs, or a vacant look in thoſe that are preſent, every creature that offers to ſpeak is ſure to be mortified. As a ſmall degree of knowledge entertains in a woman; ſo from a woman, though for a different reaſon, a ſmall expreſſion of kindneſs delights, particularly if ſhe have beauty. But, in truth, without uttering a word, ſhe has it in her power by this ſingle mark of good breeding to captivate more than I can tell. In ſhort, liſtening to the perſon who ſpeaks, with a recollected, mild, and ſteady aſpect, which nothing frivolous can divert, is perhaps the moſt valuable ſecret in the whole ſcience of genuine politeneſs. From an agreeable young

woman to an intelligent man it is incredibly ſoothing.

If to your natural ſoftneſs you join that chriſtian meekneſs, which I now preach; both together will not fail, with the aſſiſtance of proper reflection and friendly advice, to accompliſh you in the beſt and trueſt kind of breeding. You will not be in danger of putting yourſelves forward in company, of contradicting bluntly, of aſſerting poſitively, of debating obſtinately, of affecting a ſuperiority to any preſent, of engroſſing the diſcourſe, of liſtening to yourſelves with apparent ſatisfaction, of neglecting what is advanced by others, or of interrupting them without neceſſity.

When theſe are not the effects of mere youthful folly, and even then they are diſpleaſing, it is plain they proceed chiefly from pride and vanity. But we ſaid before that meekneſs is nearly allied to humility, and mightily aſſiſted by it. If you be truly humble, you will manifeſt a noble forgetfulneſs of yourſelves, with a becoming reſpect for others; a diffidence of your own ſentiments, with a

deference to theirs in doubtful points, or in ſuch as they are entitled to know better; a readineſs to learn of every one, with a diſpoſition to give each an opportunity of appearing to advantage, and thus to make all happy in their turn. Where the prevailing modes happen to be innocent, you will not affect to diſplay the refinement of your taſte, or the ſtrictneſs of your principles, by a ſcrupulous ſingularity, or a ſaucy contempt of the opinions and manners of others. Nor will thoſe conteſts and differences about precedency, form, and faſhion, which inflame ſo many of your ſex, intereſt minds that have learnt the dignity of yielding, and that deſpiſe the littleneſs of pride. In a word, the moſt important branches of chriſtian breeding you will practiſe with eaſe and pleaſure, from an internal principle. A meek deportment is the natural and ſpontaneous growth of a lowly mind. Politeneſs in you will be the offspring of the heart. How much preferable to that ſpecious, but hollow complaiſance, ſtudied by the faſhionable and the falſe, which conſiſts in an artful diſguiſing of their own paſſions, and a flattering application to thoſe of others, in a

ſupple framing of the face to all occaſions, in profeſſing the greateſt reſpect without feeling the leaſt, and in hiding very often the worſt deſigns under the ſmile of familiarity, and the ſhow of friendſhip.

I uſed the phraſe Chriſtian Breeding; that kind of courteſy, which I point out, being expreſsly enjoined by one of the writers of the New Teſtament. Perhaps you think of St. Paul, that accompliſhed apoſtle, who himſelf became all things to all men, that he might gain ſome. Such a precept might have been readily ſuggeſted by his early education in a ſeat of learning, and would have come very naturally from the hand that drew ſo divine a picture of Charity, the parent of Meekneſs. But the fact is, that it fell from the pen of an illiterate man, bred to the rougheſt of all employments. It was St. Peter, the inſpired fiſherman, that ſaid, "Be courteous:"—to intimate that the religion which he had learnt from the meek and lowly Jeſus, was able to ſoften the keeneſt and ſubdue the hotteſt temper, and even give gentleneſs to one trained amongſt winds and waves.

What ſtrangers to the ſpirit of the goſpel are

thoſe women who have never controuled their own humours, whoſe looks are contempt, and whoſe words are arrogance; whoſe general demeanour, unleſs when they are propitiated by adulation, or ſoothed by ſubmiſſion, is big with inſolence and ſcorn! How ſhall we expreſs our horror at thoſe female furies that, loſt to decency and every mild feeling of their ſex, can abandon themſelves to "all bitter-"neſs, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, "and evil ſpeaking, and all malice!" "It "is better, ſays Solomon, to dwell in a cor-"ner of the houſe-top, than with a brawling "woman in a wide houſe;" he might have added, or in a magnificent palace. In ſo doing, he would have probably ſpoken from experience; ſince it may be preſumed that ſome of thoſe eaſtern ladies, who had by their beauty enſlaved the unhappy monarch, were willing now and then by their tongues to convince him of their prerogative. The ſaying of the ſon of Sirach, on the ſame ſubject, is yet ſtronger, as well as more ironical. "A loud "crying woman," ſays he, "and a ſcold, "ſhall be ſought out to drive away the ene-my." That ſpirited writer ſatirizes the female

vices in general, with great freedom; but there is ſcarce any of them which he more frequently or more ſeverely expoſes, than this of unquietneſs and ill temper.

When a woman of ſuch diſpoſitions enters into the nuptial ſtate, what wretchedneſs can equal his to whoſe lot ſhe falls? To be tied for life to a being, whom neither reaſon can convince, nor patience win, nor any thing conquer but main force; a domeſtic plague, a boſom-fiend, from whom only her death or his own can deliver him—myſterious Providence! who can unfold the reaſons of thy procedure, when ſuch is the portion of a good man; who, mild himſelf and amiable, would have given and received peculiar felicity, had he been connected with ſome gentle female?

But let it be remembered, that violence is not neceſſary to conſtitute ill temper. Obſtinacy alone will do it. Let me conjure you, by all that is dear and lovely, to guard againſt that. Be aſſured there is not a man living, whoſe affection it does not chill, let him be otherwiſe ever ſo warm an admirer. There may be thoſe who, during the ſhort reign of Beauty, will ſupport it. But that being over,

and the faſcination of appetite diſſolved, a diſputatious, perverſe, and ſtubborn female, will always offend; and, where there is any manhood left, will often provoke to a dangerous degree. In the mean time, every one who is not in love will be diſguſted; nor can any charm of underſtanding, or of perſon, compenſate in a woman the want of ſoft compliance, and meek ſubmiſſion. Theſe the men are taught by nature, by education, and by cuſtom, to conſider as your duty, and their right; neither will they be eaſily brought to diſpenſe with it. Some of them you may ſubdue; but you can perſuade none of them into a different ſyſtem. If yet, after all, you will place your glory in deſpotic rule inſtead of kind attraction, chooſing rather to tyrannize over daſtardly ſlaves under the form of huſbands, than to influence thoſe huſbands as tender friends; what can we ſay, but that we pity them much, and you more? For the idea of a little paltry power aſſumed without title, and exerciſed without diſcretion, to give up the worthieſt triumphs of your ſex, how mean and how miſerable! "Tell it not in "Gath, publiſh it not in the ſtreets of

" Aſkelon ; leſt the daughters of the Philiſ-
" tines rejoice, leſt the daughters of the un-
" circumciſed triumph."

SERMON XIV.

On Female Meekneſs.

1 Pet. iii. 3, 4.

Whoſe adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel: but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a Meek and Quiet Spirit, which is in the ſight of God of great price.

AS a friend to your ſex, I cannot forbear lamenting, that ſo many of them ſhould loſe their conſequence, by building it on qualities inſufficient to ſupport it. Dreſs and ſhow will never long captivate any but ſuperficial minds. The reign of youth and beauty is neceſſarily ſhort. Mere vivacity may amuſe in a girl, but in a woman cannot give laſting de-

light; and trifling accompliſhments are all too feeble to fix the heart. Yet ſuch things, I am ſorry to ſay it, are the only ſources from whence the generality of young women at preſent ſeek to derive their power. In this purſuit the unmeaning applauſe, or momentary admiration of a few, is ſuppoſed to found a ſuperior and permanent importance with all. What are the effects? From that moment, female ſoftneſs is forgotten; chriſtian condeſcenſion is held mean; Humility, the parent of almoſt every excellence, is utterly deſpiſed; and hence a perpetual aim at proud dominion, inſtead of that obſequious majeſty aſcribed by the poet to innocent Eve—an aim, indeed, frequently thwarted in theſe her daughters, and, when ſucceſsful, productive of a triumph always diſguſting to us her ſons—Hence to an unnatural compound of conceited allurement and affected prudery, in place of thoſe genuine attractions which are attendant on modeſty and ſweetneſs: hence, to ſay no more, rivalſhip in figure, and quarrels for conqueſt, without end. How often, alas, have we ſeen theſe things diſgrace the ſingle ſtate! Nor need we wonder, that from habit they are of-

ten carried into the conjugal; with this difference, that the folly and preſumption, before diffuſed and practiſed on all, are now, perhaps, concentered and turned upon the huſband. Would you, my dear charge, avoid a conduct ſo indecent and unhappy? Would you ſecure, in both conditions, an influence equally juſt and amiable? To all other virtues and attainments befitting your ſex, learn to join Meekneſs. Meekneſs is followed with every honour, while ſhe arrogates none. Female Meekneſs the better part of mankind have always conſpired to crown with never-fading wreaths of love and of praiſe. It is thine, thou fair form, to command by obeying, and by yielding to conquer. In the family of Religion, "many daughters have "done virtuouſly, but thou excelleſt them "all."

The merits of this moſt lovely grace I have engaged to diſplay. Its importance in the married ſtate I mentioned in the cloſe of my laſt diſcourſe. Let me preſs that conſideration, and then proceed.

In the paſſage from which we have taken our text, the apoſtle exhorts chriſtian women

to be in ſubjection to their own huſbands, adding, as a motive which deſerved their regard, "that if any obey not the word, they "alſo without the word may be won by the "converſation of the wives, while they be-"hold your chaſte converſation, coupled with "fear;" and ſo he goes on to recommend that meek and quiet ſpirit, which ought to be their principal ornament. With relation to the particular caſe by him ſuppoſed, his meaning evidently is, that thoſe his female diſciples might, by a pious and exact deportment full of ſweetneſs and moderation, gain their huſbands over to a religion which they had not yet embraced, but which they would be no longer able to reſiſt, when they beheld and experienced its happy effects on the tempers and manners of their wives. To every excellent woman, that in this way has been inſtrumental to ſave a ſoul from death, we may addreſs, though in a lower ſenſe, thoſe words which were ſpoken by Gabriel to the Virgin Mary on a great occaſion, "Hail, thou that "art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: "bleſſed art thou among women."

I cannot do juſtice to this part of my argu-

ment without remarking, that there is reaſon to fear much of the worthleſſneſs of many married men, as well as much of the unhappineſs both of them and their partners, muſt be imputed to the Turbulent Paſſions, or Uncomplying Humours of the latter. Such is the ſameneſs of the matrimonial ſtate on one hand, ſuch its cares on the other, and, it is but fair to add, ſuch the indiſpoſition of numbers of men to be long delighted; that, to preſerve the attachment of a huſband unimpaired, the utmoſt attention and the mildeſt complacence are commonly requiſite on the ſide of the woman.

" E'en in the happieſt choice, where fav'ring
" heav'n
" Has equal love and eaſy fortune given,
" Think not, the huſband gain'd, that all is done,
" The prize of happineſs muſt ſtill be won;
" And oft, the careleſs find it to their coſt,
" The lover in the huſband may be loſt:
" The Graces might alone his heart allure;
" They and the Virtues meeting muſt ſecure."

I am aſtoniſhed at the folly of many women, who are ſti reproaching their huſbands

to be in ſubjection to their own huſbands, adding, as a motive which deſerved their regard, "that if any obey not the word, they "alſo without the word may be won by the "converſation of the wives, while they be-"hold your chaſte converſation, coupled with "fear;" and ſo he goes on to recommend that meek and quiet ſpirit, which ought to be their principal ornament. With relation to the particular caſe by him ſuppoſed, his meaning evidently is, that thoſe his female diſciples might, by a pious and exact deportment full of ſweetneſs and moderation, gain their huſbands over to a religion which they had not yet embraced, but which they would be no longer able to reſiſt, when they beheld and experienced its happy effects on the tempers and manners of their wives. To every excellent woman, that in this way has been inſtrumental to ſave a ſoul from death, we may addreſs, though in a lower ſenſe, thoſe words which were ſpoken by Gabriel to the Virgin Mary on a great occaſion, "Hail, thou that "art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: "bleſſed art thou among women."

I cannot do juſtice to this part of my argu-

ment without remarking, that there is reaſon to fear much of the worthleſſneſs of many married men, as well as much of the unhappineſs both of them and their partners, muſt be imputed to the Turbulent Paſſions, or Uncomplying Humours of the latter. Such is the ſameneſs of the matrimonial ſtate on one hand, ſuch its cares on the other, and, it is but fair to add, ſuch the indiſpoſition of numbers of men to be long delighted; that, to preſerve the attachment of a huſband unimpaired, the utmoſt attention and the mildeſt complacence are commonly requiſite on the ſide of the woman.

" E'en in the happieſt choice, where fav'ring
" heav'n
" Has equal love and eaſy fortune given,
" Think not, the huſband gain'd, that all is done,
" The prize of happineſs muſt ſtill be won;
" And oft, the careleſs find it to their coſt,
" The lover in the huſband may be loſt:
" The Graces might alone his heart allure;
" They and the Virtues meeting muſt ſecure."

I am aſtoniſhed at the folly of many women, who are ſti reproaching their huſbands

for leaving them alone, for preferring this or that company to theirs, for treating them with this and the other mark of diſregard or indifference; when, to ſpeak the truth, they have themſelves in a great meaſure to blame. Not that I would juſtify the men in any thing wrong on their part. But had you behaved to them with a more reſpectful obſervance, and a more equal tenderneſs; ſtudying their humours, overlooking their miſtakes, ſubmitting to their opinions in matters indifferent, paſſing by little inſtances of unevenneſs, caprice, or paſſion, giving ſoft anſwers to haſty words, complaining as ſeldom as poſſible, and making it your daily care to relieve their anxieties, and prevent their wiſhes, to enliven the hour of dullneſs, and call up the ideas of felicity: had you purſued this conduct, I doubt not but you would have maintained and even increaſed their eſteem, ſo far as to have ſecured every degree of influence that could conduce to their virtue, or your mutual ſatisfaction; and your houſe might at this day have been the abode of domeſtic bliſs.

There may, it is true, be ſome huſbands whom no goodneſs can impreſs. We owned

it before; but ſtill we have ground to believe, that of men who would have turned out better, had they met with diſcreet and obliging women, multitudes have been loſt by the inattention and neglect, as well as not a few by the impertinence and perverſeneſs of their wives. Little do many of you think how eaſily the heart may be alienated. A generous readineſs to make every kind allowance for what may be amiſs in others, is perhaps the rareſt quality in the world; it is however one of the moſt neceſſary, in the ſeveral connexions of ſociety, but eſpecially in the neareſt of all connexions. And yet how few huſbands, comparatively ſpeaking, have the good nature to exerciſe it towards the companions of their life! How ſoon after marriage does it often happen, that every error is magnified into a fault, every fault into a vice, and often a ſingle look is conſtrued into I know not what enormity! One great ſource of this miſery is, that moſt men expect too much from the women they marry, expect to be always received with ſmiles, and cheriſhed by endearments, forgetting that they do not always deſerve them, that thoſe women are like themſelves

imperfect, that even the beſt temper will be hurt by circumſtances, and that the brighteſt ſky cannot for ever remain unclouded. But, notwithſtanding all this, it continues true, that women might often do much more to pleaſe. Their dropping to the huſband, as we have frequently ſeen, thoſe engaging manners which they practiſed on the lover, is impiety and diſtraction at the ſame inſtant; as if the ſolemn vows they made at the altar were words of courſe, and their only concern was to be married, not to be happy, or to gain a heart, not to keep it. They are apt alſo to forget in their turn, that the complacence and obſequiouſneſs of courtſhip ſeldom extend into wedlock; that the raptures of a common paſſion are neceſſarily ſhort; that an attachment without tenderneſs, or at moſt an affection without delicacy, is as much as can be hoped from the ordinary run of huſbands; and that to preſerve even this, requires both vigilance and gentleneſs.

But that vigilance which is forced will be frequently ſuſpended; and that gentleneſs which is put on will be always precarious. Therefore we wiſh you to acquire early the

habits of ſelf controul, and to cultivate from principle a meek and quiet ſpirit. This you will do with ſucceſs, if imploring and depending on the grace of God, you make conſcience of curbing betimes the iraſcible paſſions of nature, of ſubmitting calmly to the daily mortifications of life, of generouſly yielding to thoſe about you, and particularly of condeſcending to perſons of low eſtate.

I have never ſeen a woman eminent for the laſt of theſe qualities, who was not excellent in many other ways. Reſpect to ſuperiors may be enforced by fear, or prompted by intereſt, and is therefore no demonſtrative proof of a good heart. But habitual mildneſs to thoſe of inferior rank, is one of its ſureſt indications. That young lady cannot have a bad mind, who readily enters into the diſtreſſes, and affectionately contributes to the felicity of thoſe whom Providence has placed beneath her. In reality there is no ſuch diſcovery of your tempers as your treatment of domeſtics. She is always the worthieſt character, who behaves beſt at home, and is moſt liked by the ſervants. They are the trueſt judges of a woman's diſpoſitions, becauſe to them diſguiſe is

laid aſide, and they ſee her in all lights. An unaffected propenſion to uſe them well, without partiality and without caprice, argues a confirmed benevolence. Thoſe who uſe them otherwiſe, will urge indeed their mercenary ſpirit, their want of gratitude, their want of worth; and ſuch complaints may in many inſtances be too well founded. But humanity is noble, and will riſe above little conſiderations; Chriſtianity is divine, and will not be overcome of evil, but will overcome evil with good. A faithful ſervant is a treaſure, entitled to every poſſible mark of regard; and ſome ſuch there certainly are in this country. But it muſt be confeſſed, the generality of that claſs are often highly provoking: they are ever ready to corrupt one another; and there can be little attachment where there is no principle. Nevertheleſs, I am perſuaded that treating them with tenderneſs when ſick, and with gentleneſs at other times, without making them confidents, would, joined to a wiſe and pious example, go far to gain and reform many of them. At any rate, condeſcenſion and generoſity to thoſe of lower ſtation,

will always give ſatisfaction to that mind in which there is real ſuperiority.

Your behaving handſomely to your friends, and courteouſly to all with whom you converſe, though not ſo certainly characteriſtic of the virtue I paint, will yet be a natural and agreeable effect of it. Meekneſs is like the light, which ſpreads itſelf every where: though, like the light too, it pleaſes moſt where it is leaſt looked for. To carry on the reſemblance; like that it will be ſometimes obſcured, but like that alſo, we cannot bear its being long abſent. Starts of petulance may be forgiven to proſperity; fits of fretfulneſs are natural to affliction: but what can be pleaded for harbouring a Paſſionate or a Peeviſh Temper, eaſily provoked and hardly pacified?

When I have ſeen a woman in rage, I have always wiſhed for a mirror at hand, to ſhow her to herſelf. How would ſhe have ſtarted back from her own image, if not an abſolute Demon! To thoſe of ſuch a ſtamp I have nothing to ſay but this, that a place awaits them where their rage will have its full ſcope

for ever. But ſome are of a calmer ſtrain, ſour, ſplenetic, and ſullen; not leſs unchriſtian, or leſs unfemale than the others, and on one account much worſe. In thoſe the ſtorm breaks and clears; in theſe all is ſettled gloom, that admits no ſunſhine, that preſents no proſpect of the chearful kind. For vulgar and unenlightened ſpirits, thus continually overcaſt, there may be ſome excuſe, from the want of better inſtruction, that might have helped to correct their natural infelicity of temper. But what ſhall be ſaid for habitual rancour, deep reſentment, and cool malignity in thoſe women who, together with underſtandings originally good (for ſome ſuch there are) have enjoyed the advantages of books, and converſation, of elegant breeding and knowledge of the world? In truth, their heads ſeem to have ſtarved their hearts; and the talents they poſſeſs ſerve only to render them completer fiends.

It is a ſtrange miſtake of many who think, that, provided they do not indulge in one particular paſſion, they may give a looſe to all the reſt: as if a woman could offend only by incontinence; or as if her not commiting a

ſin to which perhaps from the coldneſs of her complexion ſhe has no propenſity, or from which ſhe is reſtrained by the dread of immediate infamy and ruin, would atone for the commiſſion of others without number; for vanity and arrogance, for ſelfiſhneſs and envy, for ſuſpicion and revenge, for unbounded cenſoriouſneſs, or the blackeſt malice. I am ſufficiently aware that Pride may not comprehend the remark, and that Uncharitableneſs may not forgive it: but no candid hearer will miſtake me when I ſay, that, however ſcandalous and however deſtructive the luſts of the fleſh may be, thoſe of the mind are yet more heinous, being the proper and peculiar image of the worſt and wickedeſt being in the univerſe; in one word, they are infernal.

Our Maſter underſtood the diſtinction well, and was not afraid to ſhow that he underſtood it. In the capacity of a teacher he converſed freely with publicans and ſinners; he treated them tenderly: he came not, as he himſelf ſaid, "to call the righteous but ſinners to re-" pentance." What gentleneſs did he not diſplay to the poor creature taken in adultery! What forgiveneſs of the well-known female

penitent, who but a little before had been plunged in diſorder and ſhame! Such he declared ſhould enter into the kingdom of heaven more readily than the Scribes and Phariſees, in ſpite of all their ablutions and prayers, their frequent faſtings and ſpecious demeanour; a proud ſelf-juſtifying, and moſt unmerciful ſet of men, whom he ſcrupled not for theſe reaſons to pronounce "the children of "the devil." Let me perſuade you, from the example of your Saviour, to learn Pity towards ſuch as have gone aſtray. How ungracious in women not to ſhow mercy to women! Let me prevail with you never to expreſs a ſupercilious contempt, or unforgiving ſeverity, on the ſubject of thoſe hapleſs beings whoſe miſery pleads for commiſeration yet louder than their crimes call for cenſure. Which of you can be ſure that you would not have yielded to the ſame temptations which overcame them? Where are thoſe perfect characters that can anſwer for their own ſtability? Who made you to differ from the wretcheſeſt of human kind? Believe me, chriſtians, the moſt genuine virtue is always the moſt humble, and the moſt charitable.—Merciful heaven, may

the beſt gifts of thy providence, and the ſweeteſt influence of thy grace, deſcend evermore on that bleſſed Eſtabliſhment, which has opened a ſanctuary for wretched females weary of vice, and willing to reform. May all its benefactors obtain mercy in the day of the Lord. What ſuperior honour does ſuch an eſtabliſhment, with its ſiſter inſtitution, that happy Aſylum for the helpleſs young creatures of your ſex who are yet uncorrupted, reflect on this nation! They are truly the moſt diſtinguiſhing glory of Britain; the faireſt flowers, if I may ſo ſay, in all the garland of Engliſh Humanity.

But let me recommend to you Candour with regard to your ſex in general, as well as compaſſion towards the unhappy part of it. Ah, my fair clients, what ſhall we ſay in your behalf to thoſe men who are always telling us of your ill-natured remarks, or illiberal inſinuations to the diſadvantage of one another? Such as reſign themſelves, without controul, to this accurſed paſſion, we give up at once with indignation and abhorrence. Thoſe wilful and deliberate deſtroyers of reputation are of their "father the devil, who was" an ac-

cuſer, and "a murderer from the beginning;" nor, while they do his works, will it avail them aught, though like him they could in other reſpects "transform themſelves into "angels of light." No luſtre of beauty, no brilliancy of underſtanding, can, even among the warmeſt friends of the ſex, make compenſation for the ſpirit of cenſoriouſneſs in a female. For my own part, I conſider good nature and candid ſentiments as ſo peculiarly indiſpenſable in every woman, that, when I want to eſtimate the character of any young lady, I take the firſt opportunity of commending highly ſome perſon of her own ſex, and about her own age, but rather younger, whom ſhe knows, and who is deſervedly a favourite with the men. If without heſitation, reſerve, or a ſingle But, if with apparent pleaſure and cordiality ſhe joins in the praiſe; I am willing from that moment to form a favourable opinion of her heart. I may be miſtaken: it may be all artifice; but, for the moſt part, I think not. If on the contrary—But I need not expreſs the reſt. Inform us, ye ſtudents of human nature, what it is in the female mind that, without the re-

ſtraints of ſuperior worth, inclines it ſo ſtrongly to the love of ſcandal? I am diſpoſed to hope that, beſide the competitions formerly explained, it may be often owing to the acrimony produced by diſappointment, and often to the habits contracted by aſſociating with thoſe who, having no fund of entertainment in themſelves, are forced to ſeek it at the expence of others. Be it owing however to what it will, one thing is certain, that a proneneſs to indulge it is always deteſtable; as on the other hand, ſhe who has the generoſity to approve moſt, will have always the ſatisfaction of being moſt approved; and for the beſt of qualities, an amiable temper.——No, my fair ones, nothing can make amends for the want of that. It is like wiſdom; "It can-"not be valued with the gold of Ophir, with "the precious onyx or the ſapphire. The "gold and the cryſtal cannot equal it; and "the exchange of it ſhall not be for jewels "of fine gold. No mention ſhall be made "of coral or of pearls: for the price of it is "above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia ſhall "not equal it." Preſerve it, dearly beloved, and cheriſh it for ever.

Let "the law of kindneſs" be in your tongue. "A froward mouth and perverſe "lips put far from you." Guard againſt every word, againſt every hint that would give pain unneceſſarily to any creature. Beware of miſtaking pertneſs for vivacity, or petulance for ſpirit. Tremble at the thought of ſacrificing friendſhip to a jeſt. Indulge in no caſe a propenſity to contradiction, or the itch of criticiſm. Be not haſty to draw characters, in general companies eſpecially. Whenever you do, be ſure to touch on what is praiſe-worthy: ſomething praiſe-worthy there is in every character. Over what is culpable throw the veil of charity as often as you can. As well in this as in other reſpects, "charity ſhall hide a multitude of "ſins." When the abſent are condemned, juſtify their conduct, if poſſible; extenuate it, if not: ſome circumſtance of extenuation may be almoſt always found. If in your judgment of human actions you muſt frequently err, let it ever be on the favourable ſide; and remember, that one of a noble nature had much rather be thought humane than witty, ſimple than ſevere. Show your-

ſelves pleaſed, as often as you really are ſo; and you will ſeldom fail of pleaſing. Join to all the reſt the magnanimity of applauding freely in other women that beauty, and thoſe accompliſhments, which you yourſelves may chance not to poſſeſs, or to poſſeſs only in an inferior degree.—How lovely and great will you appear by an unaffected attention to ſuch maxims! The ſparkling of wit, or the ſplendor of fortune in others, they amuſe and dazzle for a time; but you ſhall ſecure ſolid and laſting eſteem. Your ſociety will be ſought, as eaſy and ſafe; your friendſhip will be prized, as ſincere and affectionate; in your tender boſoms your acquaintance will long to repoſe their hearts; and from your ſympathetic manner of entering into their concerns, they will receive conſolation.

But is there no danger of ſinking into inſipidity by ſuch a behaviour? Not the leaſt; if it be accompanied with thoſe other qualities which women ought to cultivate. And what ſhould hinder the ſofteſt ſpirit of your ſex from acquiring, if ſhe will, any one virtue or accompliſhment proportionate to her

capacity? It is poſſible indeed, that ſuch a caſt of mind may be attended with leſs reſolution in difficulties, with leſs endurance of affliction, with leſs acuteneſs of wit, or leſs force of underſtanding; but by due pains taken with herſelf a woman of this ſort will, I apprehend, beyond all others, improve into that form of character which we would willingly convince you is the moſt beautiful in a female. There are, I will acknowledge, now and then in ſome of a different mould, certain little caprices, or lively ſallies and ſtarts of humour, that are not unpleaſing on particular occaſions. But then they require to be bounded by decency, and blended with ſenſe; nor muſt the great principles of good affection be ever forgotten.

Amongſt the many other advantages reſulting from female meekneſs, I muſt not omit to mention how much it will conduce to Perſonal Attraction. As it commonly implies calm paſſions, ſo it naturally produces, or happily promotes, that ſerene manner which is always engaging, (a flutter never is) and which, meeting a ſentimental mind, refines very readily into a gracefulneſs of mien,

more real than any that is acquired in gay aſſemblies, and to an obſervant eye much more alluring. Imagine a circle of handſome young women, where one is diſtinguiſhed above the reſt by a flowing yet compoſed affability; by a meek look, and modeſt carriage, in which there appears no conſciouſneſs of beauty, no return upon herſelf, no ſtudy to become the object of the company, no viſible attention to her dreſs or perſon, but a recollected air, and ſteady regard to thoſe about her; what ſuperior pleaſure and reſpect will her preſence neceſſarily inſpire! Suppoſe her, if you will, entirely ſilent, from a diſpoſition to give place to others who may ſeem more deſirous of talking; will not her very ſilence intereſt? But when, on finding room left her to ſhare in the diſcourſe, ſhe delivers herſelf with that ſweetneſs of voice which often accompanies mild affections, expreſſing in gentle unſtudied accents ſuch ſentiments as are worthy of her character; I leave you to gueſs the effect on every ſuſceptible by-ſtander. Alas! my friends, what is all the momentary luſtre you are continually labouring to give thoſe lips, compared with

the permanent beauties of a lovely mind, breathing from them in agreeable converſation? Let me add, where the grace of meekneſs has the ſoul in full poſſeſſion, it will be often ſeen beaming in the eyes with a bland ſenſibility, and ſporting on the countenance in placid ſmiles, more ſoft than the ſofteſt glow of a ſummer evening; eſpecially, when the mind is at any time exalted into livelier emotions of benignity and joy. Or once more let us ſuppoſe, that affliction has given to ſuch a face a caſt of ſolemnity and languor; it will ſtill retain a kind of ſober charm that is inexpreſſibly affecting. In truth, beauty never touches the heart ſo deeply, as when with a ſweet unreluctant ſurrender it ſeems ready to faint under the ſhock of misfortune, or the load of ſorrow. But to proceed.

I would take the liberty to obſerve, that chriſtian meekneſs will be of particular uſe to prevent the artful Behaviour ſo frequently complained of in women, and in many inſtances ſo juſtly. The complaint, I confeſs, comes with an ill grace from thoſe men, whoſe daily ſtudy it is, in one ſhape or ano-

ther, to impoſe on the ſex; nor can I doubt but many of the latter would have more ſincerity, if the others had leſs deſign. They probably think themſelves juſtified in baffling art by art; and from the ſcience of defence and reſiſtance, they are too apt to paſs to that of ſtratagem and attack. It is marvellous indeed to what lengths many of them carry it, till they become mere compoſitions of hypocriſy; where each ingenuous feeling is loſt, and every word, look, motion, and minute proceeding, is a lye. Whether it be that Nature has given them more ſubtilty, or that education has taught them more diſguiſe, or that their condition affords them greater leiſure to think of ſuch things, or that they are willing to make up in wiles what they want in ſtrength; whether it be owing to one, or to all of theſe cauſes, I know not: but the fact is this, that there are very few men able to contend with a cunning woman in her own way.

Nevertheleſs, I muſt inform ſuch diſſemblers, that cunning is not true ability; it is at beſt but left-handed wiſdom; it carries with it an obliquity, and an impotence, that

a noble mind will, and that a capable one ought to deſpiſe. I need not ſay, that it is diametrically oppoſite to the ſimplicity of the goſpel, which admits our being "wiſe "as ſerpents," only ſo far as is conſiſtent with our being "harmleſs as doves." The maxims of a virtuous prudence are comprehenſive; and ſhe who has learnt, with an humble reliance on heaven's direction, to apply them as occaſion requires, will never want the aſſiſtance of artifice. In ſhort, artifice is very often a feeble auxiliary, and almoſt conſtantly betraying thoſe that truſt to it. Fond prepoſſeſſion, or unſuſpecting candour, may no doubt be eaſily deceived by female diſguiſe; but it is difficult to act a part long. Diſſimulation will ſometimes let fall the maſk; and he has not the ſpirit of a man, who does not abhor and ſcorn the detected impoſtor. Mean while, what a laborious taſk is hers! How anxious, ignoble, and wretched! From this, my fair diſciples, native goodneſs and chriſtian meekneſs will ſave you. By being what you ought to appear, you will be under no temptation of appearing what you are not. An obliging converſation,

and ſoft deportment, will proceed from you freely as from a living fountain. Having no bad paſſions to conceal, your thoughts and manners will be tranſparent. Truth will be your prompter, while Diſcretion is your guard. In you Virtue will wear her mildeſt aſpect, without conſtraint and without ſtudy. The baſeneſs and barbarity of inviting and encouraging addreſſes, which you mean not in the end to accept, you will avoid and deteſt. A proffered heart you will refuſe with civility and gratitude, where you cannot return your own; or where you can and ought, you will accept with generoſity and affection. Let me add upon the whole, that as every mode of diſſimulation is equally injudicious and unbecoming, ſo ſhe will always be the moſt attractive, while ſhe is the only honourable character, who cultivates genuine worth inſtead of artificial forms, and practiſes undiſſembled ſweetneſs inſtead of fictitious courteſy.

Such a one was Iſabella, the darling of all who knew her. It is true, ſhe lived where virtue was not eclipſed by fortune, and where depravity of manners did not prevent the

admiration of excellence. Her mind was very early accompliſhed; it was that of a woman, when ſhe was yet but a child. It ſhone in her face with a generous warmth, and at the ſame time a calm intelligence, ſeldom ſeen in a countenance ſo young; it produced in her whole deportment a mixture of ſoftneſs and dignity, which ſhe alone did not perceive. In company, the merits of others, not her own, engaged all her attention. She was never pert. Her diffidence kept her too frequently ſilent: when ſhe ſpoke, it was with ſweet ſimplicity and ſmiling reſpect. Her voice was melody itſelf, without that frivolous whine which is often occaſioned by diſſembling, and often by affectation. Among her intimate companions ſhe was ſprightly and playful: for them ſhe felt the enthuſiaſm of friendſhip. Her pen flowed in a ſtream of ſentiment alike tender and exalted; it was the interpreter of her heart. Every duty becoming her ſtation, and conſiſtent with her years, ſhe fulfilled from inſtinct ſanctified by piety; a piety, in which meekneſs ſtill preſided. Heaven beheld ſo gentle a ſpirit with complacence, and took her away

from the evil to come; took her to itſelf, in all the purity of untainted virtue. She was ſeized on a ſudden: I then ſaw her: ſhe was no way alarmed. Young and beautiful, admired and happy, ſhe ſurrendered her ſoul with a placid reſignation; ſhe ſmiled in her laſt moments; the ſmile remained on her clay-cold viſage for ſome time after the informing mind was fled. She was lovely and pleaſant in her life, and in her death an object of univerſal and affectionate lamentation. Her little ſtory furniſhes a proof, that ſentiment and meekneſs conjoined, are ſuperior to all other allurements; and that diſpoſitions at once mild and virtuous require neither diſguiſe nor heightening.

I preſume you know, that the language of inſpiration repreſents the internal character under the notion of a perſon or living form, which it ſtiles the Old or the New Man, according as the principles of ſin or of holineſs have the aſcendant. By the ſame figure of ſpeech, the inward graces and decorations of a chriſtian are here termed "the hidden "man of the heart, in that which is not "corruptible;" to contraſt them with that

corporeal beauty, and thoſe external embelliſhments, which are immediately palpable to the ſenſes, and like them ſubject to decay and corruption. Thus it is that St. Peter would call off your too anxious attention from inferior, outſide, and ſhort-lived attractions, whether original or aſſumed, to ſuch as are of ſupreme value, being in their nature ſpiritual and immortal. Nor does he ſimply reſt there, but farther recommends the latter as highly Acceptable to your Maker, "even the ornament of a meek and quiet "ſpirit, which is in the ſight of God of "great price."

Such a ſpirit, indeed, bears a near reſemblance to his own moſt merciful and bleſſed attributes, to his well beloved Son and our divinely benevolent Saviour, to thoſe good and happy creatures that conſtitute the angelic world, and to all the excellent ones of human kind, both on earth and in heaven, that belong to the ſame great family of love. Such a ſpirit proceeds directly from the common parent, and cannot but be pleaſing to its author. What ſays St. James! "The wiſ-"dom that is from above is firſt pure, then

" peaceable, gentle, and eaſy to be intreated, " full of mercy and good fruits." Such is the temper of chriſtianity, and ſuch are its effects.

To cheriſh them in yourſelves let all the preceding conſiderations incite you; but above them all, be engaged by the divine ambition of being approved by the Sovereign Judge and Rewarder of excellence. What can be added to ſuch an argument; or what can we offer upon it, that will be any way anſwerable to its dignity? To appear beautiful in the eye of God; to be beloved by the monarch of the univerſe; to be admitted, if I may uſe the phraſe, as ſo many fair and ſhining pillars into his temple below; while he contemplates each with a pleaſing aſpect, and purpoſes to remove them in due time to his ſanctuary on high, where they ſhall remain his everlaſting delight, as well as the never-ceaſing admiration of ſurrounding cherubim—Great Creator! what can equal ſuch exaltation and felicity? And can any of you, my hearers, be ſo deſtitute of every nobler ſentiment as not to aſpire after privileges like theſe? Unmoved by ſuch ideas, can you

turn away with impatience, and run to ſcenes of dreſs and ſhow with the ſame little inglorious paſſions as before; preferring to the approbation of the Eternal the ſlighteſt regards from the ſillieſt mortals? Go, thou ſenſeleſs creature, and boaſt of being admired by the butterflies of a day: See what they will do for thee, when he whoſe favour thou neglecteſt, and for ſuch things, ſhall cauſe thy "beauty to conſume like a moth," and thy heart to ſink within thee like a ſtone. Imagination ſhudders at the thought of that day, when thou ſhalt enter, trembling, forſaken and forlorn, thoſe diſmal regions which the voice of adulation cannot reach, where nothing ſhall be heard but ſounds of reproach, and blaſphemy, and wo; where, ſtript of every ornament that now decks thy body, and ſtript of that body itſelf, thy mind muſt appear without ſhelter or covering, all deformed and ghaſtly, mangled with the wounds of deſpairing guilt, and diſtorted by the violence of envenomed paſſions, while demons ſhall mock at thy miſery. Save us, almighty Redeemer, ſave theſe young people from a doom ſo dreadful!

Would you concur to prevent it? Begin with reſtraining the love of ornament; or rather, turn that dangerous affection into a higher channel, and let it flow: it will then become ſafe, uſeful, noble. Here you will have ſcope for the largeſt fancy. To the adorning of your characters we wiſh you to ſet no bounds. In dreſſing the ſoul for the company of ſaints, of angels, of God himſelf, you cannot employ too much time or thought. In ſtudying and cultivating "the "hidden man of the heart," you will every day diſcover new charms, that will improve with age, bloom in ſickneſs, live in death, ſurvive the deſolation of the grave, aſcend triumphant to the world of perfect beauty, and continue to brighten under the ſmile of heaven for ever. In a word, all the beſt beings in the creation, together with the Creator himſelf, concur in loving and honouring a beauteous mind.

Nor is this a diſtinction, for which you muſt contend with too many competitors. Carry the paſſion for dreſs almoſt ever ſo high, you will ſtill have the mortification to find ſome one or other outſhine you in

taſte, or in magnificence; but the palm of wiſdom you may bear away from the greater part unenvied, if you will only allow them the ſuperiority of faſhion. Oh! that I knew how to awaken on this ſubject the ſpirit of ambition in thoſe who are ſo prone to indulge it on a thouſand others. Happy preacher, couldſt thou behold thy hearers filled with emulation to excel one another, in all the modeſt graces and mild accompliſhments that can adorn their ſex! Happy Britain, were this the æra in which Religion, with her whole train of Virtues, might riſe into repute amongſt thy children; in which thy ſons might be "as plants grown up in their "youth," and thy "daughters as corner-"ſtones and poliſhed after the ſimilitude of "a palace!"

CONCLUSION.

THE preacher can readily ſuppoſe, that many things advanced on the ſubject of Women, in the courſe of theſe Sermons, will be deemed by the generality of his own ſex too ſoothing, while by the majority of yours many will be judged too ſevere; ſuch is the force of prejudice on both ſides. That he himſelf is quite impartial, it is impoſſible for him to be certain. He can only ſay, that he has honeſtly endeavoured, according to the beſt of his capacity, to hold the balance even. Throughout the whole, he had but one ſingle point to ſtudy; which was, to advance what he believed to be true, and what he hoped at the ſame time might be uſeful. He knew, and conſidered, that he is accountable at a higher tribunal than any upon earth. If he has wiſhed to pleaſe, it was from a ſolicitude "for your good to edification." If he has happened to offend, it was without

malignity or deſign. He ſhould be ſorry to be counted your enemy, for telling you the truth. But his concern in that caſe would be for you, not for himſelf; he is ambitious of your approbation, but he is much more ſo of his own.

His happieſt days having been chiefly paſt in the converſation of women of worth and underſtanding, it is certain, that for ſuch he has ever entertained a peculiar eſteem. He pretends not indeed, that even amongſt them he has found any jewel without a flaw. But notwithſtanding their imperfections, juſtice exacts from him this teſtimony, that, when they have in any tolerable degree approached to the ſtandard of what we have ſo often ſtyled Female Excellence, they have appeared to him, with a few exceptions in favour of the other ſex, by far the devouteſt worſhippers, the warmeſt friends, and the moſt ſentimental as well as entertaining companions. What he has principally to lament is his meeting with ſo ſmall a number, who have had elevation enough to practiſe an entire ſimplicity of manners, ſenſe enough wholly to forget their perſons

in the company of men, and meekneſs enough to be quite content when not the objects of immediate attention.

If the preacher has endeavoured, upon the principles of candour, to account for ſome paſſions in the ſex that ſeem at firſt ſight leſs innocent, or leſs excuſable; it was under the ſanction and impreſſion of that great evangelical law, "Judge not, that ye "be not judged. For with what judgment "ye judge, ye ſhall be judged: and with "what meaſure ye mete, it ſhall be mea-"ſured to you again." If he has addreſſed thoſe young perſons who formed his audience, in a ſtyle of peculiar tenderneſs, the reaſon, in plain terms, was becauſe he felt it; nor does he think, that either as a man, or as a preacher he ought to ſuppreſs, if he could, an affection which Nature has implanted, and which kept within proper bounds, Religion does not prohibit.

If he has attempted to inſinuate inſtruction under the ſmiles of complacence, or to enforce admonition with the fervours of friendſhip; ſay, ye cenſors of the age, is he really to blame? Is an auſtere countenance

the proper face of zeal, or a diſtant formality the genuine mark of holineſs? To diſguſt by rudeneſs, or to diſcourage by rigour—is that the way to win ſouls? Was it the way of the Apoſtles, or of their Maſter? Merciful Saviour! what words can paint thy benignity, into whoſe lips grace was poured, who didſt "not break the bruiſed reed, "nor quench the ſmoaking flax," whoſe character was like that of thy Father, love? I touched before on the ſpirit that breathed in his teaching: let me juſt add here, that his parables, which made ſo great a part of it, were pointed to the imagination no leſs than to the heart; preſenting the ſtrongeſt pictures of life and nature, at the ſame time that by theſe very means they impreſſed the nobleſt leſſons of piety and truth. To ſpeak in general, will any one ſay, that the ſeverity of cenſure muſt never be ſoftened, nor the awfulneſs of ſolemnity tempered; not even when the preacher has the Youthful and the Gay for his hearers? Thoſe ſurely are ſtrangers to true Wiſdom, who ſuppoſe her monitions incompatible with chearful images or joyful ideas; ſurely thoſe are unacquainted

with the human mind, who hope to reform its errors, without conciliating its affections, or think that the tutoring of terror alone will produce the love of goodneſs.

In ſome ſentiments which I have offered to your conſideration, I ſhould not be ſurpriſed if I have been taxed with idle refinement. We live in an age when whatever is held by the Few moſt ſolid and valuable, is by the Many derided as viſionary, or decried as inſignificant. In the preſent age an accompliſhed female is apt to be ſhunned under the notion of a Learned Lady; and the Virtuous Woman of the Proverbs would be in danger of being ridiculed as a compoſition of affectation. In this age the ſubject of dreſs and ornament, I am ready to acknowledge, is better underſtood than formerly; but in theſe how often are modeſty, frugality, and ſimple elegance, given up to levity or faſhion, to vain competition or miſtaken appearance! In this age the ſtrictneſs of female decorum, and the retirings of female reſerve, muſt expect to be conſtrued into ignorance of the world, if not into hypocritical airs of female ſanctity. In this polite age, I had almoſt aſked, where is

the man that believes any woman to be modeſt at heart; and where is the woman that dares to be ſuperior to the follies of her ſex? A paſſion exalted by generoſity, and refined by ſentiment, in which the man, not the equipage, was regarded, in which the higheſt gratifications of ſenſe were the loweſt objects of affection—ſuch a paſſion is now conſidered by the generality as romance. Such lovers might exiſt in the days of old, or poſſibly may be yet found in the obſcurity of retreat; but in the gay world, where all is tainted with ſenſuality, and ſacrificed to ſhow, they would appear too ungenteel to be reſpectable, and too inſipid to be happy. Here, alas, how few have the fortitude to live to their own hearts, the worth to cultivate the joys of friendſhip, or the ſoul to ſeek conjugal felicity in conjugal eſteem! Amidſt the hurry and diſſipation of diverſions, the profligacy or inſignificance of play, the futility or frivolouſneſs of formal viſiting; what regard or what room is left for ſelf-poſſeſſion or mutual confidence, for rational converſation or improving ſtudy, for the pleaſing cares of a family, or that amiable mixture of minds without which ſocial life is

modiſh diſguiſe or mean indulgence? Is it neceſſary to add, how ſcanty a portion of time is now given to private devotion; how little the ſabbath is made a day of reſt from the toil of pleaſure, or the tumult of paſſion; and to what banter from the licentious of both ſexes ſhe is expoſed, who would fill up the duties of that day with ſerioufneſs, reverence, and conſtancy? Let me only ſubjoin, that the modes of breeding now eſtabliſhed for young women are ſuch, that compoſure and ſoftneſs are hardly deemed conſiſtent, that a demeanour perfectly attentive is in hazard of paſſing for want of vivacity, and a temper thoroughly meek for want of ſpirit.

But what are you to infer from all this? That you muſt "follow a multitude to do "evil," or relinquiſh Wiſdom, becauſe ſhe is renounced by fools? No. She ſtill continues to be "juſtified of her children;" and be aſſured, my dear auditory, that thoſe very fools ſhall be forced one day to acknowledge her worth. A few ſhort years rolled away, and this gaudy ſcene will diſappear. Where are now many of the miſerable flutterers, that we have ſeen fret their hour on the ſtage

of Vanity? Doctrine like this They too once deſpiſed as idle refinement, or diſreliſhed as nauſeous dulneſs. Do ye imagine they are of the ſame mind ſtill? How, think ye, will it appear to yourſelves in the decrepitude of age, and on the bed of death? By what ſtandard ſhall you then wiſh to have regulated yourſelves; by that of reaſonable women and virtuous believers, or by the manners and maxims of a diſtracted and degenerate age?

Againſt the latter let me warn you, by every thing that is prudent and good, by all that can promote the importance of your ſex, the reformation of ours, and the happineſs of both; let me warn you, in the name of your country, in the name of your poſterity, in the name of God! Suffer not Folly to deceive or Flattery to abuſe you. The time cannot be very diſtant, at which beauty ſhall fade as a flower, by the courſe of nature: the period may be near at hand, when it ſhall ſhrink at once, under the violence of diſeaſe. However you may try to forget it, life is all uncertain: and when thoſe eyes, now full of lucid ſpirit ſhall ſink in darkneſs; when that complexion, now bright and blooming, ſhall

die away into a livid hue, and men ſhall turn with horror from thoſe features which they behold at preſent with delight; what will the world avail you, or the world's applauſe? Death, my dear hearers, Death is no courtier; he will ſhow you to yourſelves as you really are, diveſted of every external decoration and ſkin-deep allurement. If deſtitute of mental acquiſitions and moral graces, the unfading luſtre of an enlightened ſoul, "the "hidden and incorruptible man of the heart;" what will it avail you that you are now fair and flattered? The reputation of wit, the popularity of politeneſs, the profeſſion of piety itſelf, will in that conjuncture be alike ineffectual. It is only the retroſpect of capacity well employed, the conſciouſneſs of benevolence worthily exerted, and the principles of faith and hope poſſeſſing the mind, that will then ſupport and gladden it.

Where there is nothing but a picture of virtue, or a few ſhadowy qualities that may ſubſiſt without any real excellence, death will hide them for ever in the night of deſpair. The blackneſs of darkneſs will cloſe upon the naked and wandering ghoſt; while its loath-

ſome remains are conſigned to oblivion and putrefaction in the priſon of the grave, with the proſpect of a worſe doom hereafter. But where there is a living image of true goodneſs begun in this ſtate, death will deliver it with ſafety into the finiſhing hand of Eternity, to be produced with every mark of honour in the open view of heaven; where its now mortal partner, reſcued from the diſhonours of the duſt, and brightened into the graces of eternal youth, ſhall rejoin it in triumph, to ſuffer the pang of ſeparation no more.—Everlaſting Jehovah! what a crown of joy will it confer upon the preacher in that day, ſhould this little ſervice be rewarded with the reflexion of having contributed to the ſalvation or improvement of any of theſe young perſons whom he now addreſſes! If ever thine ear was open to my cry, hear me, O Lord, hear me, in their behalf. What cannot thy ſpirit perform, perform by the weakeſt hand? May that ſpirit "ſeal them unto the day of redemption!"—At that glorious period, may I meet you all amongſt "the redeemed of the Lord;" happy to ſee you ſhining, with immortal ſplendor, in "the general aſſembly and

" church of the firſt-born;" tranſported to think, that I ſhall live with you for ever; and joining in the gratulations of your fellow angels around the throne of God, when he ſhall in the ſight of all " clothe you with the gar-
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" the robe of righteouſneſs, as a bridegroom
" is decked with ornaments, and as a bride
" is adorned with her jewels." Amen.

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